

Great Patriotic War: Unknown War

Sergei Pereslegin



World War II between Realities

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Finally! The long-awaited book by the cult historian who turned our understanding of World War II upside down! A convincing answer to the most acute, most controversial, most important questions: could the Soviet Union repel an enemy offensive without allowing German troops to reach Moscow and Stalingrad? Did the Germans have a strategy that allowed them to achieve the defeat of the USSR already in 1941?

The answer is in the affirmative in both cases. Yes, such a strategy existed. Yes, the Soviet Union could repel the German offensive with little

bloodshed. How? Read the new sensational book by Sergei Pereslegin!

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FOREWORD

In the spring of 2005, Russia celebrated the sixtieth anniversary of the end of the Patriotic War. The Second World War formally ended only in the fall, but by May 1945 the outcome of events in the Pacific was beyond doubt: Japan, which had lost its aviation and navy, was left without oil, food and paper, Japan, whose industrial centers were wiped off the face of the earth by allied aviation could no longer fight. The question was only in terms of surrender.

On May 8-9, 1945, the war became history. In the autumn of 1946, it became a means of constructing history and remains so to this day. The book brought to your attention differs from hundreds and thousands of works created earlier in only one respect: the author recognizes the inextricable

unity of "historical truth" and "myth" and analyzes the past based on this unity. The author does

not set himself the task of telling in one relatively small work about the entire Second World War. It is impossible to do this, and the few attempts to somehow "put" the entire war under one cover (made by such masters as K. Tippelskirch and B. Liddell-Harth) only led to the appearance of unreadable encyclopedic volumes.

"The Second World War between Realities" is a set of essays in which the events of 1939-1945. Some confusion in the dates

¹ is due to two circumstances. Firstly, the Allies (USA and Great Britain) on May 8, 1945 accepted the unilateral surrender of the Nazi troops in Reims. The Soviet Union protested, which was immediately accepted: the Reims surrender was declared a "preliminary rehearsal", after which in Berlin, on the night of May 8 to 9, a signing ceremony of the unconditional surrender of Nazi Germany took place. Signatures under the act were delivered at 23.30 Berlin time (coinciding with Central European). In Moscow, east of Berlin, the clock had already passed midnight and it was the morning of May 9th. In this regard, Europe celebrates the end of World War II on May 8th, and Russia and the post-Soviet countries on May 9th. 5

Dov are seen as "strategic adventures"¹. The book is intended for a reader who is poorly acquainted with military history in general and the era of totalitarian wars in particular. We are talking about the Russian version of the "Unknown War" (in the East or in the West): to acquaint the modern reader with events and realities that are well known to his parents, but which are for him the Absolute Past. Yes, of course, the Patriotic War is included in

the school history course. It is also presented on television - on the eve of May 9th - by good old films, the rest of the time - by mediocre series. In Caravan PQ 17, in a huge hall, there is a meeting of the top leaders of the Third Reich. Hitler, Goering, Raeder and Schniewind are present. And that's it! No stenographers, no adjutants, no commissioners. "Reichsmarschall, please turn on the light. Dark. And let the grand admiral go and cut sandwiches! "... However, Caravan ..., based on the novel by V. Pikul, which in turn was written based on the well-known research of D. Irving, is far from the worst option. "Pearl Harbor" and "Saving Private Ryan" also claim to be authentic manuals on the history of the Great War. As well as the older Mediterranean on Fire, where the English destroyer leaves, "badly plucked, but not defeated," receiving as many direct bombing hits as would be enough to sink the entire British Mediterranean fleet three times. Although the book brought to your attention is designed for an unprepared or completely unprepared reader, a sophisticated connoisseur of the Second World War, denoting the

"Messerschmitts" with the letters "Bf", as was customary in the Reich, and who perfectly understands what a step forward was the replacement of the Pz-III G tank with the Pz- III J, will also be able to find a lot of food for thought in the text of the essays. The author proceeds from the fact that history is fundamentally alternative, and far from

not always Current Reality warehouses

¹ That rare case when the English language conveys the concept more precisely than the Russian one ("Strategy Adventure"), taking into account the ambiguity of the term adventure, which means both adventure, and adventure, and accomplishment. 6

derived from the most probable events. Unfulfilled options, possibilities that have not come true, continue to exist, forming the "subconsciousness" of the historical process, the "tree of options" of the Present in which we live. This "historical subconsciousness" affects us, forming, perhaps,

context, or maybe the background of the world in which we live. And, of course, it is impossible to understand the essence of the strategy and, moreover, to understand its adventures (or misadventures?), remaining out of context.

In some cases, we will have to, following the example of chess players, conduct an analysis on two strategic "boards" at once, comparing the Current Reality with the one that would arise if...

The text is provided with a set of appendices (including maps and diagrams) to help you navigate the political and military events of the late 1930s and early 1940s.

Part 1 EUROPEAN PROLOGUE

The first story: who and why?

"Century" is not necessarily 100 years. It is said that the 19th century began in 1789 and ended in 1914 with the volleys of the First World War. The next century, the twentieth, took only 77 years, but this historically short period included three world wars, two scientific and technological and several social revolutions, the exit of mankind into space and the mastery of nuclear weapons.

The "age of totalitarian wars" is the heyday of the industrial phase of development and the beginning of its death. Industrial production is always credited: money for the construction of a plant is spent before this plant gives and, moreover, sells products. Therefore, the industrial economy does not know "stagnant" equilibrium solutions - it either expands or faces a catastrophic non-payment crisis. That is why industrial states are constantly fighting - first for markets, then (wishing to reduce production costs) - for sources of raw materials. If the world is divided, the first priority is not to re-divide it, although within the National State the problem of control over the markets is quite

acute. More important, however, is something else: the search for an economic space free from industrial relations. Such space is necessary for the global economy in order to take the next step in development.

The era of totalitarian wars was the resolution of the intolerable contradiction between the finiteness of the earth's surface and the constant expansion of the world economy. Each of the wars allowed "legally" to absorb and destroy a huge amount of industrial output. The global war itself was, although negative, but a huge

market. Skillfully playing it, Connected

8

The United States of America went from a debtor to a global creditor in four years. The global war brought enormous destruction, not only in the physical, but also in the information space: industrial products were not only consumed (ammunition) or destroyed (buildings), but also rapidly became morally obsolete.

Total wars played the role of a high-tech industrial disintegrator¹. These wars contributed greatly

to the progress - and not only "negative" - in the production of weapons. Significantly increasing the connectivity of the world², they called into question such a form of organization of society as the nation state.

Since the CPSU, like the NSDAP, can be viewed as a form of social organization, alternative to the nation state, it would not be an exaggeration to say that in the totalitarian wars of the 20th century, especially in World War II, the classical National States fought against chimerical, but containing significant stored social energy structures. , representing a hybrid of an ordinary political party and a medieval knightly order³ .

¹ A. I. Neklessa.

² The Second World War created a transport aircraft with a significant carrying capacity, and "brought" the jet engine to practical use. In addition, the problem of supplying large military groups in the Pacific led to the emergence of logistics, the development of communications, detection (radar) and control. In the 1950s and 1960s, these factors, combined, contributed to the triumph of passenger aviation and a sharp increase in the mobility of the population of the leading countries of the world.

³ But then the USSR and Germany had to fight on the same side? Yes, and it took all the treachery of Hitler, all the prudence of Stalin, all the political skill of British and American diplomacy to make things go differently. However, for now we are considering not only the Second World War, but the whole complex of relationships in the era of totalitarian wars. And within this "frame" only Great Britain and the United States, which form one of the parties to the conflict: the nation state - the totalitarian party - "did not change the front" throughout the war. The rest of the countries changed their position more than once, regularly fighting with weapons in their hands against their own interests. 9

The second component of the conflict (generally speaking, arising from the first - the struggle of the forms of governing society) is the clash of civilizations. All the same Great Britain and the United States, materialistic, rational, democratic, - changing political configurations, are at war either with the occult, magical civilization of Germany (according to M. Bergier, "Nazism is magic plus tank divisions"), then with the communist Soviet Union, taken from to build the "kingdom of God on Earth" with improvised materials, then with Shinto Japan, relying on the slogan "the spirit is stronger than the flesh" and throwing detachments of "kamikaze" pilots against the best air defense in the world. Rationalism, as a form of being, fought against irrationalism, comfort against military glory. During World War II, the American aircraft carrier Yorktown needed urgent repairs in order to throw her into the decisive battle. Among the damaged equipment, the replacement of which was considered vital, was a soda machine

water.

You can find another component - the clash of strategies. Sea powers fought against land powers. The Soviet-German style of warfare fought, with its emphasis on the beauty of the operation, with the Anglo-Saxon, based on superiority in resources and the highest "grand strategy", the art of winning the world.

This picture can be painted in different colors . One should not only look for the struggle of good against evil, civilization against barbarism, unarmed democratic states against ruthless aggressors ready for war in the totalitarian wars of the 20th century. In the modern picture of the world,

the Second World War is given the role of an "object lesson", telling about the inevitability of the defeat of inhuman fascist Germany, which dared to raise a hand against the "free peoples". A sort of DR Tolkien in the Hollywood-New Zealand projection.

Reality is much more complicated.

1D. Bronstein.

10

As I once wrote¹ : all three socio-cultural communities that fought among themselves in the Second World War are equally unacceptable for

modern man. "Hitler

Germany is nationalism and anti-Semitism in the crudest, most primitive forms, it is a struggle against university culture and bonfires from books, wars and executions of hostages.

The Stalinist Soviet Union is presented as a system that denies all humanity and gravitates toward medieval social imprints (up to the Inquisition and serfdom).

For the democratic West, *"owning the sea, world trade, the wealth of the Earth and itself,"* disgusting complacency, absolutization of private property, a tendency to stop time and close the historical spiral into a ring are typical. On the other hand, the Reich is a proud challenge thrown by the

vanquished to the triumphant winner, the quintessence of scientific and technological progress, the open road of mankind to the stars. The USSR is a unique experiment in creating a social system with decreasing entropy, the pinnacle of a two-thousand-year-old Christian tradition, the first attempt to create a society focused on caring for people and their personal growth. Finally, the West went down in history as an outpost of unconditional individual freedom, material and spiritual.

The unconditional success of one of these civilizations is a disaster for humanity, the death of any of them is an irreparable loss. And when analyzing the events of the Second World War, one should always remember this."

The victory of the anti-Hitler forces was based on undeniable material and technical superiority on the battlefield, combined with a quantitative superiority - and this circumstance followed from the very logic of the Second World War, as a "conflict of civilizations." The final stage of the war was the first, but not the last, example of the practical application of the Douai doctrine, which provides for the rejection of the struggle.

¹ S. Pereslegin "Operation Schlieffen". In book. "Hitler's Other Possibilities". M.-SPb.: ACT, Terra fantastica, 2001.

armies (where there are always "options") in favor of the methodical and completely safe destruction of cities for the strongest side.

The towns of Europe to this day have not fully healed the wounds inflicted by the carpet bombings of 1943-1945¹.

There were no innocents in that

war. Capturing cities and lands, the Nazis established a regime of the most severe terror and immediately launched a program for the extermination of Jews, Gypsies, the mentally ill (without exception) and everyone else (selectively). Soviet troops brought Marxism in Stalin's interpretation to Europe, the fight against the "enemies of the people", mass deportations and theft of property to an unprecedented extent. The British and Americans just bombed. Perhaps only D. Marshall, the chief of staff of the American army, who was not coping with his military duties, turned out to be at the height of the situation as a politician, having discerned in dead France and bleeding Germany the future architects of a united Europe².

Plot Two: From Versailles to Gleiwitz

The First World War ended with a massive social catastrophe. Austria-Hungary ceased to exist. The Ottoman Empire collapsed and was occupied. Germany was deprived of the eastern provinces, Alsace and Lorraine, gave the winners a fleet and aviation, eliminated the military

production. Russia lost its social integrity, a revolution was raging in its expanses. France was completely drained of blood, Great Britain lost its financial independence. The United States, relatively weakly affected by the war, turned out to be unprepared for the center of Kaliningrad / Königsberg still consists mainly of

¹ squares, and on the densely populated island of Kneipkoff, the only building left that was destroyed, but did not collapse, is the cathedral of the XIV century.

² S. Pereslegin. "The Second World War between Realities". Magazine "Friendship of Peoples". 2005, no. 4.

¹²

inevitable post-war economic crisis: they were waiting for the hungry "march of veterans" on Washington.

Europe is starving. The "Spanish flu" epidemic that came from Southeast Asia claimed new millions of human lives. According to F. Engels: "... the collapse is such that dozens of crowns are lying on the pavement, and there is no one to lift these crowns ..."

In this situation,

everything depended on whether the ruling elites could offer their peoples a coherent format of existence, explaining in the name of what military sacrifices were made, and what is the guarantee that a global war will not happen again.

The first "move" was for the allies. In Versailles, Saint-Germain, Trianon, Neuilly and Sevres, the foundations of a new democratic world order based on the sovereignty of peoples, the idea of democracy and the right of nations to self-determination were laid. Much has been written and is still being written about the "predatory nature" of the Treaty of Versailles, but the irony is that the victorious powers and their leaders really aspired to a just world. Since ancient times, Europe has been a boiling "cauldron of peoples", structured by supranational empires. It was impossible to draw ethnically justified boundaries in it. The need to somehow take into account the imperatives of the military and economic security of the newly created states "squared this impossibility." The leadership of the allies quite often retreated from the principles of justice in favor of the most ordinary revenge, which, rather, was to the benefit of the cause: in a completely justly organized Europe, a new global war would have broken out already in the mid-1920s. Soviet Russia found itself outside the Versailles world order. She was not a winner and not a loser, she generally found

herself outside the space of the usual political game. For better or worse, the government of V. Lenin turned the results of the Great War into a grandiose revolutionary construction: not a regime, not even a state, but a completely new culture was created. This culture, based on the deepest social mixing, "inclusion in history" of those social strata that from time immemorial existed outside the world's event flows, giving almost

¹³

eschatological meaning of human activity, was then very, very attractive. Germany was defeated on the

battlefields, but chose not to notice. The version of a "stab in the back" from their own social democracy or the Austrians, Bulgarians and Turks unable to fight appeared even before the end of the Paris Conference. By signing the Treaty of Versailles, the Germans made no secret of the fact that they were doing this only in submission to force. It was obvious that sooner or later, but one of the greatest cultures of Europe will find an opportunity to oppose this

his strength.

Finally, the United States, which for the first time showed its capabilities during the war years. The Treaty of Versailles was signed under British dictation, but

the American establishment, refusing to ratify the system of peace treaties, immediately made it clear that the old world order would be revised.

At least two powers (Italy and Japan), formally classified as winners, did not get what they expected at Versailles, and moved into the category of "offended". Initially, Yugoslavia became an unviable entity. Romania and Hungary had mutual territorial claims. Poland shared territory with Lithuania. Czechoslovakia retained the Sudetenland as a guarantee of a future clash with Germany... If before the war Europe was the "working space" of one, albeit a very serious mutual conflict,¹ there were several dozen hotbeds of war. From a purely formal point of view, the problem of East Prussia was the least solvable. Separated from the rest of Germany by the Danzig then now or Polish "corridor", this area had a negative

connection. Germany could neither give up this territory nor defend it in the framework of the "positional game on the world chessboard." The "Danzig problem" was a guarantee of a future European war.

¹ This refers to the conflict between France and the German Empire around Alsace and Lorraine, annexed by the Germans after the war of 1870-1871.

14

Germany's desire to return to the ranks of the great European powers clashed with the desire of an exhausted France to keep the world within the framework of the Versailles agreements. Great Britain, which "did not have permanent allies, but had permanent interests," tried to limit the influence of France on the continent, for which it secretly helped Germany (or rather, turned a blind eye to the violation of the Versailles restrictions). Convinced of the disunity

of Europe and the weakening of the will of Great Britain, expressed in the slogan: "Ten years without war", the United States organized a peace conference in Washington at the end of 1921.

This event became one of the key events in preparation for a future war. First of all, the Anglo-Japanese alliance treaty was broken. For the United States, this removed the risk of a possible "war on two fronts" with the strongest maritime powers in the world, and for Great Britain it meant a significant weakening of the situation in the Far East. Hinting at the possibility of war debt cassation, the White House forced Britain to agree to parity in naval armaments. For the fleets of the great powers, the formula 5:5:3:1.75:1.75 was adopted, to which the naval forces¹ of the United States, Great Britain, Japan, Italy and France must comply. Immediately after the signing of the agreements², the US Congress

¹ The conference introduced the concept of "standard displacement", described the main classes of warships, set the maximum displacement and armament for each class, imposed restrictions on the rate of replacement of obsolete combat units, and set the maximum tonnage of the battle and aircraft carrier fleet of the participating powers. The conference also eliminated the Anglo-Japanese alliance and significantly curtailed Japan's economic rights in China. There were

five of them: the "Treaty of the Four Powers", dissolving the Anglo-Japanese Union and formally replacing it with a quadripartite agreement, the "Treaty of the Nine Powers",

² establishing a policy of equal rights and "open doors" in China, the "Treatise on Customs Tariff", regulating the trade of the great powers with China, the "Washington Agreement", according to which Japan was obliged to withdraw troops from Shandong, return the Qingdao-Jinan railway and Jiaozhou territory to the Chinese side, and finally, the naval "Five Powers Treaty". 15

adopted a bill on the recovery of war debts from France and Great Britain in full, and Secretary of State Ch. Hughes announced in an official note that the United States did not participate in the European Genoa Conference.

This conference was a historic chance for Europe, but W. Rathenau's statement that "there are neither winners nor losers here" was met with icy silence by the Allied leaders. In response, the "rogue powers" - Germany and Soviet Russia - signed a cooperation agreement in Rapallo. This agreement provided the RSFSR with the latest military and industrial technologies. For Germany, it made it possible to hide part of the country's rearmament programs from the Allied Control Commission. Later, both sides would construct their history in the spirit that these agreements did not play a special role in formatting the flow of events, but then, in 1922, no one doubted the significance of what happened. -

It is believed that Adolf Hitler and the party he led played a leading role in the rearmament of Germany. The contribution of the Nazis is indeed difficult to underestimate, but their activities were so obvious success only because they were based on a solid foundation laid during the days of the Reichswehr and the Weimar Republic. The Allies,

having limited the size of the German army to a meager figure of 100,000 people, fell into an unobvious trap. The fact is that the Germans got the opportunity to present the most stringent requirements to everyone who wanted to serve, to use only first-class "human material". An acute shortage of resources, not only for an offensive but for a defensive war with Poland and Czechoslovakia, forced commanders of all levels to abandon such a typical pattern for the army, in any situation to seek the slightest tactical chances, to outplay the enemy due to the art of warfare. It would not be an exaggeration to say that it was precisely because of the allied restrictions that the German army developed its own specific style of warfare, called "blitzkrieg". The Reichswehr lacked tanks and aircraft. This problem was gradually

overcome: the planes were assembled in Holland, in Russia (the agreement in Rapallo!), were created as supposedly civilian models. The role of tanks was originally played by automata 16

tires and tractors, sometimes even bicycles. It looked ridiculous, but if the French army learned to interact with tanks mainly in parades, then the Germans used every opportunity for combat training. And in this respect, tractors and bicycles were of more practical use to the German army than the three or four thousand Renaults in service with the French. By the end of the decade, events enter a phase of growth. The United States, and

behind them the countries of Europe, are entering an economic crisis of still unknown scale. F. Roosevelt, having come to power, is forced to spin the flywheel of military production. New battleships and aircraft carriers have been ordered: the United States in one fell swoop "chooses" the entire displacement limit established by the Washington Agreement. The production of military aircraft is increasing at times. Ammunition production is growing. The sharp increase in state orders causes a chain reaction: steel, aluminum, TNT, engines, gasoline are needed ... - the country's economy is slowly and painfully recovering from the crisis, but at a very high price. Since 1933, the United States has been interested in a major European war. Only war can recoup the resources expended and turn economic losses into the capitalization of the country's territory.

The crisis had an equally strong impact on Germany. At the beginning of 1933, the NSDAP came to power, offering a clear recipe for a way out of the economic and political impasse. "Victory is the will," A. Hitler paraphrases Marshal F. Foch, "Germany must arm, break

Treaty of Versailles, return the lost lands and regain the status of a great power. And for all this you need to get rid of the Jews. Hitler was consistent in carrying out the program presented by his party, and the confiscated Jewish capital went almost entirely to the modernization of the army. Order was restored in the country, crime was practically eradicated. But the German economy was henceforth built on the principle of "guns instead of butter." This meant that the Reich was also interested in the war. Only, unlike the United States, he could not expect to fence himself off from her by the ocean.

Germany reintroduced conscription, began to officially create tanks and planes. The country was getting ready

17

to the war, but there was not enough time for this preparation. To this day, the Luftwaffe is criticized for its lack of a strategic bomber. However, in the conditions in which German aviation really developed, fighters were vital - to gain air superiority - and tactical bombers, paving the way for ground forces. Without this, the Wehrmacht had little chance even in the war against a coalition of minor European powers. And without heavy "bombers" to wage war in Europe was quite realistic. Germany made its decision under conditions of an acute shortage of resources and, above all, time. For the Soviet Union, the crisis had the opposite content: there was hope to overcome the years-long lag in

the development of industry and transport. The country's industrialization program is adopted and the countdown of five-year plans begins. A lot has been written about the fact that the five-year plans were never actually carried out. So, after all, they were not designed to be executed! The Stalinist regime was similar to Hitler's in the sense that it knew how to mobilize people, forcing them to solve obviously insoluble tasks. One could (and should) be proud of this, but it turned out that a normally functioning economy that does not require hourly exploits works better. Nevertheless, the shift made by the Soviet Union by the mid-1930s was quite impressive. A country entered the era of industrialization, capable, at best, of fighting

Poland. From this era, a first-class military and industrial power emerged, immediately entering the world technological competition. And in France and the UK, the second consecutive program "Ten Years Without War" dragged on despondently. France, however, in its free time and at the expense of free resources, slowly built the colossal and

completely meaningless in the era of mechanized wars, the Maginot Line, the name of which will soon become a household name.

By the middle of the decade, the war begins to "knock on the door." In 1933, Japan and Germany leave the League of Nations. In 1934, Japan denounces the Washington Treaty. On February 26, 1935, Germany formally drops the Versailles restrictions on the development of the armed forces.

18

On October 3 of the same year, Mussolini invaded Ethiopia. In 1937, the conflict in China finally develops into a big war, and Germany occupies the Rhineland. Battles begin in Spain, which becomes a testing ground for the latest weapons of Italy, Germany and the USSR. On January 28, 1938, the USA adopts a new

armament program; on March 11-12, Hitler annexes Austria; within a month, Great Britain and the USA recognize the Anschluss.

At the end of the year, the Czechoslovak (Sudet) crisis takes place, which is the first visible act of a new big war in Europe. Germany carried it out artistically, especially if one bears in mind that her tank forces were not yet in a position to carry out operations on a large scale, and the power of the Luftwaffe was largely created by Goebbels' propaganda. However, the allies, also unprepared for war, were in a difficult position. Formally, Germany, demanding a plebiscite in the German-populated Sudetenland, acted within the framework of the "human rights" policy. Her claims, supported by a referendum, looked quite legitimate. N. Chamberlain brought to London "peace for our generation", but events continued to

develop. Franco occupies all of Spain and withdraws from the League of Nations. In the spring of 1939, Germany annexed Klaipeda, occupied the remnants of Czechoslovakia and demanded that Poland return Danzig. An intolerable situation is created for Great Britain and France, but they continue to fight by diplomatic methods. On March 22, a joint statement appears on the assistance of Belgium, Holland and Switzerland in the event of aggression. 27 April Great Britain passes the law on universal conscription. In response, the next day, Germany breaks the agreement with Great Britain on the limitation of naval forces and denounces the German-Polish non-aggression pact. On May 19, the Franco-Polish military alliance is concluded. And on August 23, Hitler secured his rear by signing an agreement in Moscow known as the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. This document plays a key role in a number of design versions

history, but, in my opinion, completely undeserved.

19

We have followed, albeit concisely, the policy of the great powers in interwar period and we can formulate some important conclusions.

First, Germany's policy during this period was consistent and clear: under all governments, the country sought to free itself from the Versailles restrictions, create a competitive army and regain its lost position in Europe. The Nazi regime stands out against the general background only by the pace of military buildup (quantity finally turned into quality) and rhetoric. Secondly, besides Germany, the United States of America and

the Soviet Union were also interested in the European war. For the United States, the war was a convenient way to impose on Europe the costs of the economic crisis of 1929, and for the USSR it was an important step in the "gathering" of Russian lands. It is less obvious that the Polish ruling elite, which took part in the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia, also sought war (or at least considered such a possibility as acceptable). Thirdly, the remilitarization of Germany was clearly supported not only

Russia/USSR, but also Japan, and (less explicitly) the US and the UK.

In the summer of 1939, the war had already been decided, and the only question was in what political configuration it would begin. Under these conditions, the 1939 treaty was vital for Germany and very beneficial for the USSR. On what basis did the Western powers believe (and modern democratic historians still believe) that the Soviet Union would not sign this agreement or was not entitled to sign it? If this "foundation" is "natural universal hatred of fascism", then wasn't it with A. Hitler that N. Chamberlain and E. Daladier concluded an agreement on the division of Czechoslovakia more dirty than the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, and besides, politically and pragmatically useless ?

August 25, one day after the conclusion of the Russian-German treaty,

the government of N. Chamberlain provided Poland with guarantees of territorial integrity and concluded an agreement on a military alliance in the event of aggression. The "train" had long since left, and this belated gesture was the usual hysteria of a weak man and a worthless politician, Neville .

Chamberlain, who finally realized that he had been deceived. In its way, these commitments are unique - never before has a responsible minister of His Majesty uttered such a thing:

"... in the event of an action which will clearly threaten the independence of Poland and which *the Polish Government considers vital to resist with its national armed forces*, His Majesty's Government will consider itself obliged immediately to give the Polish Government all the support that is in its power." According to the letter and spirit of this document, the question of Britain's entry into the war should be decided by the Polish government!

On the same day, the clever and insightful D. Lloyd George drew the attention of N. Chamberlain to this circumstance and remarked: "I consider your statement today to be an irresponsible gamble that can end very

Badly".

On August 31, mobilization was announced in Poland. The next night, German criminals, dressed in Polish military uniforms, seized the radio station in Gleiwitz and shouted several anti-German slogans on the air. As A. Hitler said to the generals: "I will give a pretext for unleashing a war, but how plausible it will be, it does not matter"¹ .

Plot Three: Blitzkrieg in Europe -1 -

Contrary to popular belief, in September 1939 Germany was not really ready even for a fight with Poland, let alone a war on two fronts. Hitler's strategists focused in their plans on 1944, in the extreme case - on 1942. By the beginning of the armed conflict in Europe, the basis of the German armored fleet was the tankettes PI, P-II, against which even

Czechoslovakian mo

¹ I cannot fail to note that for Hitler's aggression it was still necessary to present the country and the international community with some kind of pretext for war, albeit provocative and clearly implausible. The attack on Iraq in the spring of 2003 did not require the United States and its allies even such a shaky foundation. 21

del 38(t) made a favorable impression. There were very few R-Sh and P-IV tanks¹ . Aviation was lacking. Although the army switched to military service relatively long ago, it was not possible to overcome the "growing pains" of the one hundred thousandth Reichswehr into a millionth army, and the combat effectiveness of the infantry was assessed as unsatisfactory. A few days later, F. Halder, chief of the General Staff of the Ground Forces (OKH), writes in his diary: "We don't even have the infantry that we had in 1914."

Germany could put 98 divisions on the battlefield, of which 36 were practically untrained and understaffed. These latter (almost without tanks and aircraft) constituted the Western Front, which was supposed to defend the German borders (and, in particular, the Ruhr) from the alleged offensive of the Allies, whose forces were estimated at 80-90 full-blooded divisions. Everything that could fight, the Wehrmacht sent to Poland, providing a significant but not decisive superiority in forces in the east: 62 divisions against 39, 1.6 million against 1 million, 6,000 artillery pieces against 4,300. the advantage of the Wehrmacht was more significant: respectively 2,800 for 870 tanks, 2,000 for 407 aircraft. On

Nearly all German tanks and planes ended up in the east.

It is clear that Germany had to rush into a reckless offensive in the East and achieve decisive successes there before the Allies overcome the dubious value of fortifications along the border ("Siegfried Line") and reach the Rhine. The task of the Polish army was to maintain combat capability for two weeks. To this transparent military picture were added several not quite

obvious factors. In 1914, both sides could count on the unconditional neutrality of Belgium and Holland. In 1939, Belgium, formally remaining her

¹ On September 1, 1939, the German tank forces consisted of 1,445 tankettes PI, 1,223 - Pz.-II, 98 tanks R-Sh, 211 - P-IV, 219 -35 (t), 76 - 38 (t) and 5 assault Stug I guns. In other words, out of 3,277 armored vehicles, over 80% were tankettes and light

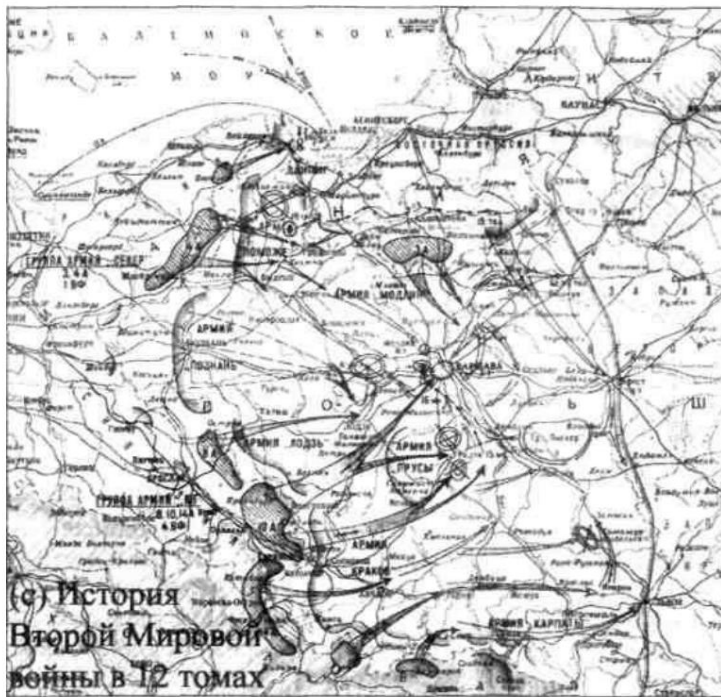
tanks.

22

trawling, was connected with France and Great Britain by a network of agreements and, according to OKH calculations, could well let the allied forces through its territory. This created additional intrigue on the Western Front: in this "situation" the motorized units of the Allies could cover the right flank of the German army and get ahead of it with access to the lower Rhine. On the other hand, the position of the Soviet Union remained uncertain, whose interest in Poland was obvious.

The Polish command professed the most dangerous military principle for the weakest side: "cover everything and give nothing away." It was supposed to defend the entire territory of the country, including the "Danzig Corridor", and against East Prussia, under favorable circumstances, to attack. To us, who know the "final result", this plan seems insane. He was such, but in madness, nevertheless, there was a system. Poland was strongly influenced by the French military school, which proceeded from the fundamental inadmissibility of gaps in the front line. The Poles covered their flanks with the sea and the Carpathians and believed that they could hold on to such a position for quite a long time: it would take the Germans at least two weeks to concentrate artillery and make a local tactical breakthrough. The Allies would need the same amount of time in order to go over to the offensive on the Western Front with large forces, so Rydz-Smigly considered the overall operational balance to be positive for himself.

The Germans proceeded from the fact that the war should be short, like a lightning strike (blitzkrieg). In two weeks, the Polish army must be completely destroyed, and the country occupied. This plan was based on the extensive use of aviation and, above all, dive bombers, which were entrusted with the task of "paving the way" for mobile formations. The OKH did not use tanks to reinforce infantry divisions. Almost all armored vehicles capable of moving across the battlefield were concentrated in five buildings - the 14th, 15th, 16th, 19th and mountain. These formations were supposed to find weaknesses in the enemy's defense, overcome it immediately and enter the operational space, winning the flanks of the Polish armies. In the future, a decisive battle was planned to encircle and destroy 23



Polish campaign

moreover, the infantry corps were to act against the front of the enemy, and the mobile units were to attack him from the rear. This whole concept has never been tested in practice and did not look very convincing. Even the German leadership doubted its effectiveness, as evidenced by the separation of the 10th division from the 19th division into "direct subordination" to the commander of Army Group North and the creation of a separate Kempf tank division. not included in the tank corps.

An incidental circumstance brought some benefit to the Germans: in September, the 25th anniversary of the battle of Tannenberg was celebrated, where in 1914 Ludendorff surrounded and destroyed most of the 2nd Russian army of General Samsonov. In this regard, the Germans had the opportunity to transfer troops to East Prussia under the pretext of participating in the upcoming celebrations.

24

The battle began on the very first day of the war. It is often written that the Poles did not finish their concentration. This is true, but the Germans also did not complete the mobilization, and they could not solve this problem in such a short time.

It immediately became clear that deploying troops in the "Polish Corridor" was suicide: the southern flank of the Pomeranian army was deeply engulfed by the advancing German units, and the army, sandwiched between West and East Prussia, had no room to maneuver and could only wait for its fate, staying in position. By September 3, the "corridor" was cut, the German

troops in West and East Prussia formed a united front. Now Army Group North could act against the strategic flank and rear of the Polish troops, developing an offensive along the Vistula. The crisis developed even more acutely in the south, where tank units crossed the Warta. The Krakow army was thrown back to the northeast, the Lodz army was captured from both flanks, the Prussian reserve army was suddenly attacked in its rear positions, the Poznan army, which did not enter the battle, was cut off.

It is interesting that the Polish army, which by September 4-5 had lost all control and was cut into separate pockets of resistance, continued to fight, while the German infantry, by no means, showed miracles of courage. This, however, did not matter: it turned out that Poland

there is nothing to oppose to the new German military doctrine embodied in panzer divisions and bomber squadrons. Already on September 12 (according to other sources, on September 16), the command and government left the territory of the country, ordering the troops to "hold on to the end." The troops - in general and on the whole - did this: Warsaw defended itself until September 28, the organized resistance of the last large grouping of troops ceased only on October 5, and individual battalions fought until winter - but the Germans from the second week of the operation began to transfer troops to the Western Front. In the east, they were only interested in Lvov: the need to give it to the Soviet Union, which crossed the border of Poland on September 17, caused extreme displeasure of the generals. Halder calls the abandonment of Lvov "a day of shame for the political leadership."

25

The "stab in the back" that the Soviet Union inflicted on Poland still causes the right indignation of the Poles to this day, but it should be noted that the war was lost by them two weeks earlier. By September 17, it was only about the "post mortem" stage: the Polish state was destroyed, and it was only about the "sharing of the inheritance". Let us note here that the actions of Germany and the USSR, which put an end to the "rotten offspring of the Treaty of Versailles, the so-called Polish state"¹, found full understanding and sympathy in the West. In any case, the Anglo-French military leadership did not do anything to help Poland

Nothing.

-2-

The Polish victory of the Wehrmacht dramatically changed the situation in Europe. First of all, the soldiers of the Wehrmacht felt trust in their leadership, and the generals in the new way of waging war. The Western allies found themselves in a situation that they tried with all their might to avoid: they were facing a direct armed clash with Germany. The Soviet Union received temporary freedom of action in Northern and Eastern Europe. In the following months,

the warring parties launched a struggle for the so-called "Scandinavian foothold". Their motivation was completely different. Until the very last moment, Hitler did not imagine that Great Britain and France, having surrendered

Czechoslovakia so easily, would start a war over Poland. For ten to twelve days, the shadow of a strategic catastrophe hung over the Reich, all the more formidable because it was not possible to withdraw from the battle the units and formations that were grinding the Polish army on the Warta and Bzura. Escaped with a slight fright, Hitler on October 6 proposed to convene a peace conference, but this initiative was publicly rejected by the West. In the circumstances that arose, Hitler decided to crush the Allied defenses in France and do it as best he could. From the speech of V. M. Molotov.

¹

26

faster - until the military leaders of the allies draw the proper conclusions from the Polish campaign and translate these conclusions into new organizational and tactical schemes. The Fuhrer could not even imagine that the Anglo-French consider the main reasons for the defeat of Poland to be the weak combat capability of the Polish army and the entry into the war of the Soviet Union.

Be that as it may, Hitler hurried the command of the Wehrmacht, demanding an immediate offensive in the West. But the Wehrmacht also needed a pause for reorganization, and besides, the weather in the autumn of 1939 was not conducive to aviation operations. The beginning of the operation was continuously postponed, by the beginning of January 1940 it began to give off a farcical scene, when the bandit ten times

in a row he brings a club over the head of an oblivious respectable citizen, and every time something prevents him from striking. The Allies did not pay much attention to the actions of the Germans, considering their front to be insurmountable. In fact, they occupied a very strong position, based on the long-term fortifications of the Maginot Line .. A whole group of armies remained in reserve, with the task of eliminating any "inevitable accidents in war."

For their part, the Allies believed that the German border "Siegfried Line" was also insurmountable (in any case, its assault would be accompanied by significant losses). They pinned their hopes on the blockade of Germany, bombers and propaganda. But the blockade was not completely hermetic, and already on September 19 Churchill turned his attention to Norway, proposing to violate its neutrality by laying minefields in its territorial waters. From this day begins the prehistory of the short and stormy Norwegian campaign of 1940. The Soviet Union took advantage of the freedom of action granted to it to

significantly expand its borders in Europe. In the autumn of 1939, the eastern part of Poland (Western Ukraine and Western Belarus) was captured and important strategic positions were acquired in the Baltic states. In November, the Finnish war began. There is no doubt that I. Stalin solved the problem of "collecting" the lands of the Russian Empire lost during the revolutionary years. But certain strategies

27

There were also logical reasons for his actions. Of course, there could be no question of an offensive by the Finnish or Estonian army on Leningrad. But in the conditions of a big war - whether with Hitler or with the allies - the presence of strategic bridgeheads so deeply protruding into the territory of Russia represented a serious danger. With the logic characteristic of the era of totalitarian wars, I. Stalin fended off this danger by conquest.

However, if the strategic actions of the USSR were justified, then their political support was beyond all criticism, and the tactical implementation almost turned into a national catastrophe. Having suffered until winter with the concentration of forces, stubbornly trying to solve the combat mission with the forces of one Leningrad military district, the Red Army launched a decisive offensive against a magnificent defensive position, inscribed by K. Mannerheim in the wooded and swampy impassability of the Karelian Isthmus.

The advance has stopped. A stream of military aid from the West went to Finland. W. Churchill welcomed the expansion of the war, believing that now, under the banner of assistance to the military efforts of Finland, it would be possible to bring Norway under his control. At the same time, the issue of an attack on the oil fields of Baku by Anglo-French aircraft based in Syria was being worked out.

Fortunately for the USSR, these preparations were carried out even more slowly than the buildup of Soviet armies on the Karelian Isthmus. On February 11, Meretskov broke through the enemy defenses and the next day captured the key Sumy position of the Mannerheim Line. It was not possible to defeat the Finnish army, but within two weeks the Soviet troops reached Vyborg. A "decent peace" was concluded: Finland remained independent, but the Karelian Isthmus entirely passed to Russia. For both sides, this was clearly not the result they expected. V. Suvorov and B. Liddell-Gart write that nothing else could have been expected:

Karelia was "not fit" for a "blitzkrieg". This, of course, is not

So.

Indeed, breaking through a long-term defense in a wooded-river area in the absence of normal communication lines, and even in winter, is a matter of the highest

28

degree is not healthy. But what prevented the Soviet command from taking advantage of the absolute advantage at sea and in the air? In the autumn, before the freeze-up on the Gulf of Finland, there was enough time to attack Helsinki directly - by air and sea landing. Such an operation would be swift and deadly: landing ships leave at night, planes rise from airfields in the morning, and already at one in the afternoon, deputies of the Finnish National Assembly, under the threat of shelling the city from the cruiser Kirov and the battleships Marat and Oktyabrskaya Revolyutsiya, transfer power to a new the government of Finland. Towards evening the League of Nations meets, to whose questions the Soviet Union reasonably answers that it is in peace and friendship with the legitimate Finnish government.

One of the many possibilities of World War II that remained unrealized. On January 10, while

Meretskov was preparing his decisive offensive, Hitler was studying weather reports in the West, and the Allies were forming units and formations for operations in Finland and Norway, an unusual incident occurred that had far-reaching consequences. The plane of a German liaison officer who flew from Münster to Bonn to find out minor details of the German plan of attack in the West made an emergency landing in Belgium. With him, this communications officer with the rank of major had no more, no less than a detailed plan for the future operation. It was not possible to destroy the document, it fell into the hands of the Belgian counterintelligence officers and was handed over to the French and British in the evening of the same day. German intelligence agencies have confirmed the complete declassification of the war plan in the West. It became obvious that a completely new operational development was needed. The "Autumn"

plan of 1939, known as the "OKH Plan", was a worsened version of the Schlieffen plan. Again, as in 1914, the main blow was delivered through Belgium (by the forces of Army Group B). This time it was assumed that the enemy would be ready for such a development of events. It was believed, however, that Belgium could be captured before the Allies helped her. Further, it was supposed to move to the south-west "within the limits of the possible." The plan did not provide for the defeat of the enemy, it was only about obtaining positional advantages and covering the Ruhr.

29

E. Manstein, Chief of Staff of Army Group A, considered such a result insufficient and insisted on a different operational idea.

In the literature, the "Manstein Plan" is usually contrasted with the "OKH Plan", but in reality we are talking about two "echo versions" of the same idea. The essence is the "struggle for the pace", gaining time.

In 1914, Schlieffen believed that a strike through Belgium would be a complete surprise for the enemy, so the advancing right wing of the German troops would achieve decisive success in Belgium and northern France before the enemy organized a counter-maneuver in Lorraine or the Ardennes. In 1940, there was no hope for surprise: the French command was ready for the German offensive in Belgium and had a preliminary agreement with the Belgians, coordinating the actions of the parties in the event that Germany violated the neutrality of Belgium. Actually, the 1st Army Group was created in case it was necessary to quickly enter large forces into Belgian territory.

But such a maneuver had the peculiarity that the transfer of large forces to

Belgium inevitably created a gap between the northern and eastern wings of the allies. For several days, this gap was provided only by the 9th Army of A. Korap, stretched to the limit, crossed by the Ardennes and the Meuse River, then fresh formations were to come up. The whole question was whether the Germans would have time to take advantage of the relative weakness of the French troops in the Ardennes faster than this weakness was overcome. If the answer to this question is positive, then Korap's army was threatened with defeat, and the German mobile formations went to the rear of the 1st Allied Army Group.

During the autumn and winter, the German command hesitated between two operational schemes, tending to a compromise, which, as you know, is worse than any of the alternatives. The "incident" of 10 January prompted the Germans to abandon the "OKH Plan" entirely. Another accidental and incidental circumstance - E. Manstein, who literally "got" Halder and Brauchitsch with continuous demands to revise the deployment scheme in the West, was removed from the post of chief of staff of Army Group A and sent to command an army corps.

thirty

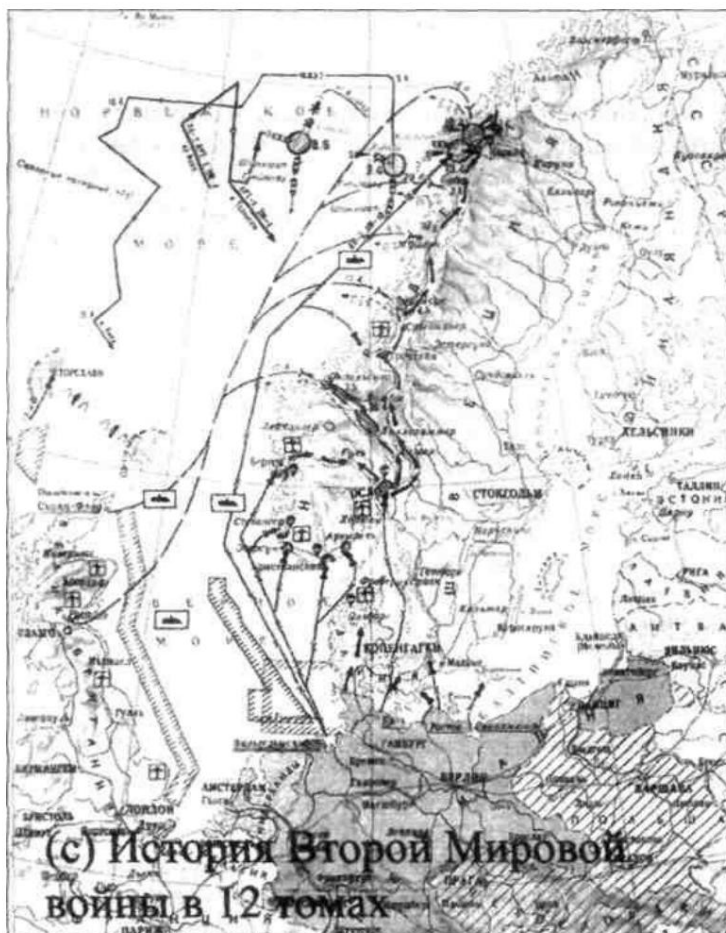
But, like any newly appointed corps commander, he was summoned by Hitler for a personal conversation. During this conversation, Manstein outlined to Hitler the essence of his operational plan and made the Führer of the German nation his ally. Halder had to come to terms with the inevitable and make every effort to improve the new deployment scheme, according to which the direction of the main attack shifted to the group "A" zone. Now the "Scandinavian bridgehead" appeared in the plans of the Germans, but as a diversionary operation. It was necessary to convince the allies that the command of the Wehrmacht was considering the upcoming struggle in the West as a positional and strategic one.

-3- On April 9, 1940, the Wehrmacht began one of its most brilliant operations, in which almost the entire Reich fleet and large Luftwaffe forces were involved. Germany captured Denmark, losing two people killed and ten wounded. At the same time, German troops began to land at all key points in Norway. The allies, who began mining

the Norwegian troops and themselves were preparing the occupation of Norway at about the same number, reacted immediately. In Narvik, German destroyers were beaten, in Oslo, the Norwegians sank the heavy cruiser Blücher with military personnel. Allied troops landed in the Trondheim region and in the vicinity of Narvik, heavy fighting ensued, which continued in central Norway until the beginning of May, and in northern Norway even until June, when actions on this sector of the strategic front had already lost all meaning. The Germans got their way in Scandinavia,

but at a very high price for them. The German fleet was brought to a non-operational state. In Narvik alone, 10 destroyers and a submarine were lost. Another destroyer was sunk by aircraft in Trondheim, the cruiser "Königsberg" - in Bergen, "Karsluhe" - by a submarine near Christiansund. Heavy damage. In total, the Germans lost 4 submarines.

1



Norwegian campaign

Denia received the battlecruisers Scharnhorst and Gneisenau¹.

By May 10, all the possibilities of the "opening game" were exhausted. It was on the Western Front. Allied losses unexpectedly turned

¹ out to be even greater: the Glories aircraft carrier, 2 cruisers (Effingham and Kurli), 9 destroyers, 6 submarines, many heavily damaged ships. 32

- 4 -

On the morning of this day, when Germany began hostilities against Holland, Belgium, Luxembourg and France, the balance of forces looked as follows: 1. On the northern sector of the front,

Germany had 29 divisions (including 3 tank and 2 motorized) against 16 French, 9 English, 23 Belgian and 10 Dutch divisions. For obvious reasons, the Anglo-French troops were late, and in the early days only the Belgian and Dutch divisions could resist the Nazis, which, however, were enough.

2. In the center, 45 German divisions (7 armored, 3 motorized) are fighting with 16 French.

3. On the Maginot Line,

49 French and 1 British divisions were going to repel the attack of the 17 divisions of the von Leeb Army Group.

The Germans did not waste the seven months between the Polish and French campaigns in vain: not separate tank corps, but full-blooded tank groups participated in the offensive in the west.

From the very first hours, Army Group B began fierce battles in Holland and northern Belgium. Airborne troops with a total strength of 4 parachute battalions and 1 airborne regiment landed in The Hague and Rotterdam, the 9th Panzer Division single-handedly broke through the defenses and penetrated into

Fortress Holland. On the fifth day, Holland capitulated without waiting for the French 7th Army to approach. In Belgium, 75 paratroopers captured the key fort Eben Emael, another group took control of the bridges over the Meuse and the Albert Canal. The Belgian front was broken through, their troops retreated back, hindering the organized advance of the Anglo-French troops to the Dil River. All these heroic actions of the German troops, who applied the "miracle strategy" on a large scale, did not matter, except that they held the 1st Army Group and attracted all the attention

allied command.

To the south, in the Ardennes, the offensive was carried out according to a completely different tactical scheme, which can be characterized by the saying "there is no reception against scrap."

Tank

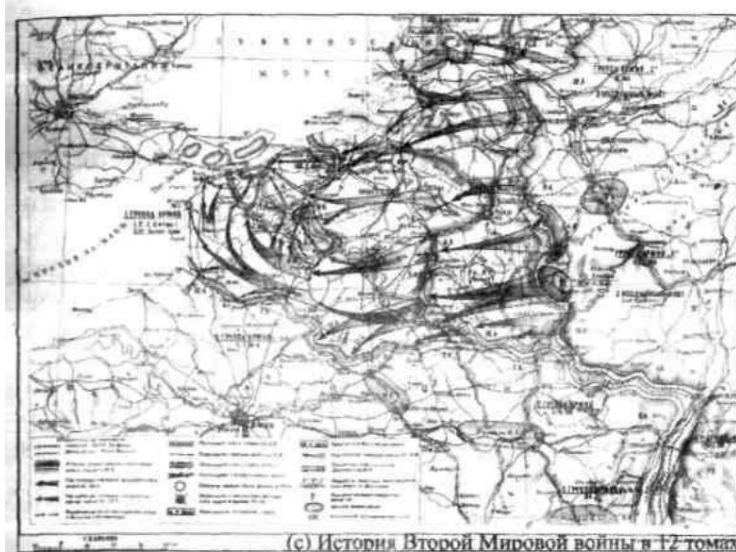
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the corps of Guderian, Reinhard and Goth, supported by three field armies, overcame the Ardennes in three days, threw back the Korap army to the Meuse and groped for the junction between the 2nd and 9th Allied armies. On the morning of May 14, the Germans already had a foothold on the western bank of the Meuse, and by the end of the next day they overtook the last units of the French in the movement to the west and entered the operational space. From that moment on, for the Germans, tensions between command and control became a more serious problem in the development of the operation than the resistance of the Allies, who only canceled the march in Belgium on May 16 and embarked on the hopeless task of saving what could still be saved. Near Dunkirk, the British organized a heroic evacuation, transporting most of the expeditionary force to the British coast (of course, without rears, transport and heavy weapons). To this day, it is believed that Hitler deliberately stopped Guderian's tank units in front of Dunkirk, not wanting to kill "racially close" British soldiers in vain. As part of another WWII "assembly" scheme, Dunkirk is Hitler's first strategic defeat and an undoubted victory for the British, who retained their army. In fact, as will be shown in the next story, the evacuation of the expeditionary force was only an insignificant episode of the battle in the West. More importantly, the constant "stop orders" slowed down the advance and gave the Allies the opportunity to create a new line of defense along the Somme. The Germans had to lose time to regroup troops and prepare a new offensive operation. This operation itself ("Rot") developed unexpectedly hard, but the Germans

now, after the withdrawal of Belgium and Holland from the war, the evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force and the defeat of the 1st Army Group, had an overwhelming superiority in forces. On June 10, when everything was already over, Italy finally decided to "fulfill its allied duty" and stab France in the back. "I need a few dozen dead to sit down at the negotiating table," Mussolini announced cynically.

Let's give the French their due: with the complete collapse of the defense, in the conditions of a military catastrophe that had already begun, the chain of soldiers remaining in the Alps stopped the offensive

34



First phase of the French campaign

Italians and pushed them back to the border. Truly, in the war there were no soldiers worse than Italians and a command more mediocre than Italian!

The "playing out" of the first stage of the world war began. On June 10, Norway was abandoned. France surrendered on June 22. Between these dates, the Soviet Union ended its game in the Baltics: from June 14 to 16, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia were presented with ultimatums. The countries accepted them, and the Baltic states joined the USSR at the end of June. At the end of the next month, it was the turn of Bessarabia and northern Bukovina.

The battles of 1939-1940 erased Poland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Denmark, Holland, Belgium, Luxembourg, two-thirds of France from the geographical map, changed the borders of Romania and Finland. The Wehrmacht won a grand victory, but, in essence, only the opening stage of the game ended. It may seem paradoxical, but the "exchanges" that took place suited not only Germany, but also the rest of the "players" remaining at the international "chessboard". 35

Plot Four: "Northern Gambit" vs. "Sea Lion" -1 - Until now, the

events in all the huge - from the North Cape to the Mediterranean Sea, from the English Channel to the Bug - theater of operations obeyed the logic of two great long-dead strategists. In accordance with von Schlieffen's outlines, the Wehrmacht crushed France, held East Prussia, secured the Eastern Front, and kept Italy as an ally. In accordance with the plans of Sir John Fisher, Great Britain sacrificed Poland and France in order, using its unconditional predominance at sea, to blockade Germany on the European continent. Now the old records were over, the staffs and commanders had to learn to improvise. The position of France did not matter. Germany achieved all the real and declared goals of the war, needed peace and was ready to pay

for this peace. The Hitlerite leadership sincerely believed that Great Britain was also interested in a speedy end to the war and would go to peace negotiations, unless the preconditions seemed too harsh to her. Germany was not going to demand from England anything other than recognition of the accomplished state of affairs. Great Britain, represented by the government of W. Churchill, was in

a very difficult position. speaking tongues

¹ It is interesting that such a situation, extremely unlikely in 1939-1940, developed naturally in 1914-1915. Correctly and consistently carrying out the Schlieffen Plan, Germany led France out of the war: the allies in 1914 could not oppose anything real to the movement of the German right wing. For this, the Germans had to pay with the heavy defeat of Austria-Hungary and the emergence of a crisis in the East. In Schlieffen's best dreams, the front line is established there along the line of the western Bug, but the Vistula-San line suited the old field marshal quite well. For their part, the British, without encountering serious opposition, blockade the German fleet in Heligoland and deploy a strategic blockade of Germany.

36

com of the previous war, the "best sword" (the French army) was knocked out of her hands. British troops suffered a brutal defeat on the continent, and, of course, the "glorious evacuation" - Operation Dynamo, when all heavy equipment, all the civilian population fleeing and almost all French units were thrown on the coast, did not raise the mood of the soldiers. Decades of "economy" had reduced the once Great Navy of Great Britain to such a state that, although it was superior to the Kriegsmarine,¹ it was not able to cover all the vulnerable points of the Empire, over which the Sun did not set out of habit.

In practice, W. Churchill faced a choice: peace with Germany, emphasizing the shame of defeat, putting Great Britain in the humiliating position of a junior partner of the Reich, but allowing the British Empire to remain intact for some time, or the institutionalization of the war, turning it from a limited into a world , in the struggle to the bitter end, where the stake will be not only the integrity of the Empire, but also the physical existence

nation.

The descendant of the Dukes of Marlborough did not hesitate. On July 3, 1940, when the German commanding staff had just begun a leisurely discussion of the upcoming invasion of England, which " *may not be needed at all*," Admiral Sommerville demanded that his French colleague Jansul either immediately join his squadron and raise British flags on the ships, or blow up the fleet . Ultimatum

¹ "Kriegsmarine" - the German naval forces, controlled by the headquarters of the OKM, headed by Grand Admiral Raeder, were an independent branch of the military and were directly subordinate to the Fuhrer. The air force or "Luftwaffe", controlled by the headquarters of the OKL and headed by G. Goering, was just as independent and independent. The headquarters of the OKH controlled the ground forces, but considered itself the heir and assignee of the large General Staff of the German Empire and considered the other commands to be subordinate to itself. In order to give the actions of the military branches some consistency, another high command was created - OKW (led by Keitel and Jodl), which, however, had neither power, nor authority, nor resources and quickly turned into a "pocket" headquarters of A Hitler, trying to duplicate the functions of the OKH. As a result, any coordination of the German war effort required many days of meetings in the presence of the Fuehrer. 37

was rejected, and Sommerville opened fire on the ships of the former ally. In this battle, the Royal Navy achieved great success: it sank a battleship, destroyed a battlecruiser, killed 1,397 and maimed 351 French sailors. A few more French ships were captured in British ports - as it is now customary to write *"almost without the shedding of blood."*

The government of W. Churchill committed a war crime and took credit for an act of unheard-of treachery. But the French fleet ceased to be an "indefinite force" capable of influencing the course of armed struggle at sea. W. Churchill literally and figuratively "burned the ships": now he was obliged to win the war - under the threat of the verdict of people and the judgment of history.

The action in Oran ("Catapult") determined the readiness of Great Britain to fight to the end. The true position of the United States - a non-belligerent

ally of England. With the outbreak of the war, the United States declared its neutrality, however, this was a rather unusual neutrality. The Roosevelt administration pushed a decision through Congress that allowed one of the belligerents to be supplied with weapons on a huge scale (and, moreover, free of charge). American warships organized patrols in the western Atlantic. The United States gradually increased its military presence in Iceland (in 1941, the American occupying troops would be replaced. The formal justification

¹ for the action of the British government to "neutralize" the French fleet was the fear that the ships could be captured by the Germans and used against Great Britain. However, the terms of the Franco-German truce did not provide for the issuance of the fleet; the ships remained under French jurisdiction and were controlled by French crews. The teams had orders to sink the ships if they were threatened with capture. The British had no reason to doubt that this order would be carried out. (In 1943, when the Germans occupied the territory of Vichy France, he and was carried out by all the remaining ships in Toulon.) In fact, W. Churchill sought to deprive the Pétain government of any opportunity to build its political game. Possessing the fifth fleet in the world, Vichy remained a great power, whose interests and position would have to be taken into account when planning and conducting operations. For example, the situation in the Mediterranean immediately acquired new degrees of freedom.

38

there are English, and in 1944, at a referendum organized under the supervision of the United States, the Danish-Icelandic union will be terminated). For the legal justification of this policy, which is incompatible even with the most "liberal" ideas about neutrality, F. Roosevelt invented a new term "non-belligerent state". Now, of all the great powers, only the Soviet Union has not determined its position in the world conflict.

Germany turned out to be unprepared for such a rapid development of political events that did not meet her plans. On July 19, for some reason, Hitler came up with peace proposals, which the next day were coldly and contemptuously rejected by Great Britain - and not even by W. Churchill, but by Lord Halifax. -2- After the defeat in Western Europe,

Great Britain could only operate in the political space, and even make rare, senseless and at that time mostly unsuccessful terrorist attacks on German territory. The Reich, having gained an advantage in the war, was obliged to attack under the threat of losing this advantage. In principle, there were three ways to deal with England. First, a direct invasion of the Islands.

Such an operation in the entire history was carried out only once, when the Normans of William the Conqueror defeated the Anglo-Saxons at Hastings and captured the kingdom. There were many more failures: a landing in England was planned, seriously prepared, but never carried out by Philip II of Spain, Louis XV of France, Napoleon the Great. Secondly, "peripheral strategy" - striking at the strongholds of the British Empire, primarily in the Mediterranean Sea. This plan

is also associated with the name of Napoleon, although the goal of the Egyptian and Syrian campaigns was not so much Great Britain as the three hundred millionth East. "Peripheral strategy" was also meant by A. Schlieffen. Finally, the third possibility was to isolate Britain from allies, albeit potential ones, and continental

39

that economic blockade. This idea belonged to Napoleon, who for twelve years carried it out with commendable perseverance and with disastrous results.

The Germans honestly tried to use all three schemes, starting with the first.

Until the first days of July 1940, the top German leadership was not at all concerned about the problem of war with England. Accordingly, no operational plans were prepared and everything had to be made from scratch. Only on July 2, F. Halder writes in his diary: "... the nature of the operation is the crossing of a large river ..." and it is in the vicinity of this date that the first "critical point" is located, at which two completely different successive events come into contact - Current Reality and one of its alternatives.

The Battle of England is probably the most replayed campaign by history buffs and military professionals since the Battle of Waterloo. In itself, this circumstance indirectly confirms that the historical fabric in the summer and autumn of 1940 seemed fragile: it is difficult to determine how close the British were to defeat, and the Germans to victory.

The operational environment was difficult for both sides. The experience of fighting in Belgium showed that even the best British units were not able to withstand the Wehrmacht in open battle. Deprived of tanks and artillery, the divisions taken out from Dunkirk, not to mention the Home Guard militias, did not have a single chance in battle. In practice, if the Germans managed to land a sufficiently large force on the Islands and arrange at least some kind of supply for them, the fate of England would be decided¹. The whole problem was in "if" ... The British Navy dominated the sea to

the same extent that the Wehrmacht outnumbered the English on land. Yes he

¹ W. Churchill, who had nothing to lose after the Catapult, would have continued to resist, relying on the Empire and the remnants of the fleet. But after the loss of the British Isles, Europe would have been lost to the allies (even assuming that the United States would still go to war in this Reality) for a very long time.

40

could not cover the entire Islands. Yes, most likely, he could not disrupt the landing of the first wave. But in order to block the bridgehead and disrupt any supply of troops, not to mention the sending of reinforcements, the British had enough ships.

Aviation brought additional intrigue to this plot. So far, Luftwaffe aircraft have had few opportunities to attack British ships, but the German pilots have used all their chances brilliantly. The main forces of the Home Fleet were forced to base themselves on the Orkney Islands, on the extreme north of the theater of operations, inaccessible to the Junkers and Heinkels. This saved them from air attacks, but also increased the "reaction time". If the Germans risked using the core of their fleet to support the landing, they would seize dominance in the English Channel for a day. True, in a day this "core" would have to be forgotten. On the other hand, during these days it was possible to have time to protect the landing area with a mine corridor, the forcing of which would require time and effort. These "mines" appear in a number of variants, but in general it must be borne in mind that the Germans, by no means, owned an inexhaustible supply of mines.

Both sides believed that the question of air supremacy would be decisive. If the Royal Air Force (RAF) manages to hold the sky over Southern England and the English Channel, the landing will not take place or will be thwarted. If they fail, then the Germans will find one way or another to deceive the Home Fleet and win a few days to consolidate the bridgehead. And in the "game", when the day over the strait is unconditionally given to the Germans, they will somehow arrange supplies, despite the fact that the British will control the English Channel at night.

Very great difficulties were caused by the question from the moment the operation began. It was clear that the British needed time to re-equip

units and the creation of defense. But the Germans, who in the summer of 1941 had neither invasion plans, nor crossing facilities, nor the equipment necessary for landing, also needed months to prepare. The same mines, for example, were in¹ warehouses, and most of them were in the Baltic ports. 41

In this situation, the history of the operation began, which received in the Current Reality name "Sea Lion".

-3-

Most of the military-historical commentators and designers of "alternative Realities" adhere, as the only possible one, to the ideology of the invasion that prevailed in the German leadership in the summer of 1940. In other words, various optimized versions of the same "Sea Lion" are considered. For example, K. Maxi, the author and editor of a whole series of Anglo-American "alternatives", proposes for the Germans to speed up the preparation of the operation and start the invasion as early as July 13¹. In **dey ATTENTION!** Until now, we have been analyzing only in the logic of the Current Reality, that is, those events that are known to us from history

¹ textbooks and eyewitness accounts. However, starting from this chapter, we will from time to time operate with Alternative Realities: invented or reconstructed events that could have happened, but did not happen (or, in any case, did not happen to us). Since there are many versions of Reality, and some of them look no less plausible than ordinary reality (however, there is an opinion that plausibility was not one of the essential tasks of the Constructor or Constructors of the Current Reality), errors of perception and even a certain disorientation in historical / not quite true / fictitious events. In this regard, the following measures have been taken:

- pages that are dedicated to Alternative Realities will be marked appropriate warning;
- all the Realities

considered in the book are indicated by the letters of the Greek alphabet and numbers (the alphabetic code for designating Reflection Worlds was first introduced, as far as I know, by the writer A. Lazarchuk in the novel "Soldiers of Babylon" - the final part of the trilogy "Late to Summer"), The reality accepted "by default" is the Current - b;

- Relationships of the Realities and branching points are depicted on the drawings attached to the chapters containing a story about alternative Realities (the schemes of time lines are well known in the training courses of the special theory of relativity, such drawings were first used in the literature by A. Gromova and R. Nudelman in the story "At the Institute Time is under investigation." 42

Indeed, such a change in Reality is hardly possible: even if preparations begin immediately after Dunkirk, that is, even before the complete defeat of France and its capitulation, even if one somehow creates a plan in a week, and trains troops in a month and supplies them with the necessary equipment, it is impossible to accelerate the putting in order and concentration of landing craft (Belgian, Dutch and French, because Germany has practically none of its own), as well as the design and construction of landing ferries and heavy gliders. Even with the "cooperative game" Germany could not prepare until the end of September. But timing was not the main problem. "Sea Lion" in all its versions remains a purely military operation: aviation is seen as a branch of the armed

forces, paving the way for infantry and isolating the battlefield from enemy ships. As for the fleet, all authorities are trying to minimize its role. Meanwhile, the war with the British on their territory cannot be an army operation, and the course of events in the Current Reality confirmed this.

So, at the beginning of July, the German leadership faces the following tasks:

- in the field of ground forces - to form from the available forces an "army

invasions, train units and formations in the intricacies of landing operations (that is, lead them through a training camp) and concentrate on the coast;

- in the field of landing aids - to collect tonnage from Belgian, Dutch, Danish, German, French ports, more or less suitable for use on the English Channel, repair this tonnage and find sailors to service it; • in the field of naval forces - to develop a plan to cover the

bridgehead, to intensify repair and fitting out work on the Kriegsmarine ships, to concentrate mines on the Western theater of operations;

- in the field of aviation - to relocate aviation to French and Belgian airfields, to seize air supremacy over the English Channel and southern England *at any cost*, to create a heavy landing glider.

The problems of the British were, perhaps, more significant, but they did not require such active and productive activity:

43

- reorganize the troops, create a system of positional defense of the coast and strategic lines of resistance within the country; • with the light forces of the fleet to maintain dominance at sea, including in the English Channel, to be ready to use the main forces of the "Home Fleet" against the German bridgehead; • aviation to prevent

the collection of enemy landing craft in the ports of the English Channel (W. Churchill: "The enemy's ports are the first line of our anti-amphibious defense"); • Save airfields in Southern England *at*

all costs. This understanding by the parties of their tasks

led to the colossal air "Battle of England", in which the Luftwaffe tried to open the way for the Invasion forces. Thousands of books have been written about this battle, and there is

hardly a lover of military history who has forgotten the historical phrase of W. Churchill: "Never before have so many been indebted to so few." In the Current Reality, the British won a strategic victory in the battles over Southern England, but this victory was due to improper preparations for the Invasion.

During July - the first days of August, the parties probed each other, the Germans moved the aviation base zone to the west, and the British worked out the tactics of central control of fighters using radar warning stations. On August 13, the Germans appointed "Day of the Eagle." "Air blitz", however, did not happen. For the first time, the Germans faced an enemy who was ready to fight to the end and did not feel doomed.

The fighting immediately took on a fierce character. Both sides raised their results that nullified all races

¹ The Poles in 1939, the Allies in the spring of 1940, from the very first combat clashes, found themselves in a situation that was hopeless in tactical, operational and strategic terms. This concerned the aviation units in full measure. As A. de Saint-Exupéry recalls in *The Military Pilot*, long-range reconnaissance crews, the aviation elite, were thrown into battle only so that France "suffered losses not only by prisoners." 44

four planners¹. The Luftwaffe suffered heavy, unheard of losses. Slowly, very slowly, the invisible line denoting the "line of resistance" moved north and west. The British could still compensate for the losses in the machines, but were no longer able to cover the losses in the pilots. The RAF squadrons snarled, they forced the Germans to switch from "free hunting" tactics to bomber escorts, but the situation over the English Channel and airfields in southern England worsened.

Quite unexpectedly, at the beginning of September, Hitler, before that in the activity

aviation practically did not interfere, orders to stop the destruction of British airfields and focus on the bombing of British cities. This decision of the Fuhrer of the German nation is practically not discussed in the literature, although it was key in its content and much more mysterious than the well-known "stop order" that supposedly saved the British Expeditionary Force near Dunkirk. It is believed that with terrorist attacks on major cities, Hitler tried to force England to capitulate. In fact, within the framework of the Nazi picture of the world, the British belonged to the Aryans, on whom the methods of intimidation were supposed to have the opposite effect - to strengthen the will and determination to fight. As far as one can tell, Hitler took racial theory very seriously. In addition, during the First World War, he was on the British sector of the front for a long time and he fully imagined the national psychology of the British. Yes

¹ "On August 18, the British report 144 aircraft shot down by them. In reality, according to the records of the flight crew, they had 69 clear victories that day, but at the same time, the Germans only 36 aircraft did not return to the airfields! For their part, the Germans claim that they shot down 147 British aircraft, while there are 58 records of victories, and 23 aircraft were decommissioned from the British. But the most amazing thing is not even that. All these 23 aircraft are single-seat fighters, and the losses in personnel (missing and dead, that is, KIA and MIA), it turns out, are 29 people ... Thus, six Spitfires and Hurricanes returned to bases on their own and landed with "dead" or "missing" pilots ... "(A. Vasiliev) Luftwaffe and RAF ". In the book. K. Maxi" Invasion ". M. 2001). 45



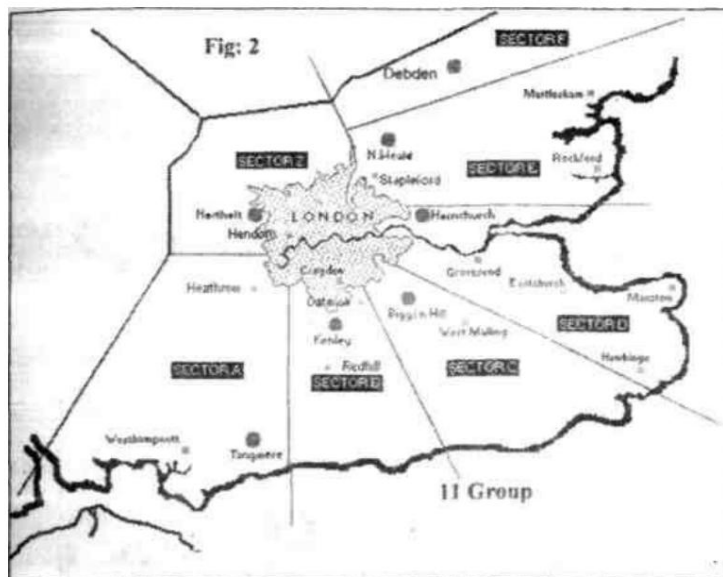
Spitfire

and the defeat of aviation, which seemed to be just around the corner, would be a much more serious argument in favor of ending the war than the bombing of cities ...

Most likely, Hitler realized by the beginning of September that there would be no Invasion, and attacks on London were undertaken to mask the first strategic defeat suffered by the Reich. Be that as it may,

the struggle for air supremacy ended, and instead began, in the words of the historian A. Vasiliev, "a kind of Douai doctrine for the poor in the performance of medium bombers without a normal escort fighter." This stage of the "Battle of England" came to naught by the end of October .

¹ In July-October, the Germans lost 845 fighters, the British - 1172 fighters. The loss of the Germans in bombers did not matter for the success or failure of the Invasion.



Air defense of Great Britain in 1940

While stubborn battles were going on in the air over the English Channel and England, and the infantry units intended for landing were training on the obstacle course, the OKH command tried to coordinate the landing operation plan with the leadership of the Kriegsmarine. The sailors insist on an extremely narrow landing front, the Wehrmacht headquarters rightly points out that such an operation has no chance of development: "it's like putting the landing troops through a meat grinder."

On the evening of July 28, even before Eagle Day and the beginning of the decisive phase of the air war, F. Halder received a response expected for a week from the headquarters of the Navy. Schnivindt reports that there can be no loading of troops from the coast (although the British did this without any preparation and without any special problems during Operation Dynamo), and it will take not 12 hours, but 10 days to land the first echelon of troops. An enraged Halder says that "this makes all previous calculations meaningless and the operation itself impossible."

Greifenberg, chief of the operations department of the OKH headquarters, is sent to Berlin, where the main



Luftwaffe Air Force

48

command of the KM, and receives an even more discouraging statement. "Nothing can be done, there will be no landing craft by May next year, the fleet cannot cover the landing area from the English fleet, there should be no question of a broad front, including Cornwall and Lyme Bay, regardless of any orders from the Fuhrer, and even the most limited amphibious operation would mean the annihilation of the German naval forces.

After that, the leadership of the Wehrmacht lost all interest in the Invasion. Of course, if the British air force had been completely crushed by mid-August, and the Luftwaffe had moved on to attacks on ports, bridges and roads, they would have tried to revive the operation, but, in general, even before the outcome of the battle in the air was determined, the highest command Reich authorities abandoned the strategy of landing in England and began to look for other ways to continue the war. -4- K. Maxi

makes two major changes to the planning of the English campaign. Firstly, it speeds up the start of preparations, shifting it by about a month (the decision on the invasion was made on May 24, not July 13, Directive No. 16 was signed on June 7, not July 16, "Eagle Day" was scheduled for July 8, instead of August 13). Secondly, in the alternate Reality, K. Maxi A. Hitler instructs the commands to "find a compromise". Preparations for the landing,

of course, were carried out by the Germans with unacceptable slowness. However, drawing up a network diagram indicates that there are a number of key points that are almost impossible to transfer. So, only by the end of August, the railway and river communication between Germany and the English Channel coast is fully restored. By the same date, and not earlier, the airborne troops and aircraft for them are ready. Barges and outboard motors required eight weeks for their delivery, that is, even according to K. Maxi's version, they could only be ready in September.

Eight weeks at full exertion were required for the

49

aviation relocation. Worst of all, the situation was with the collection of transport ships and crews for

them. As for the "compromise", the organization of *project* interaction between the branches of the armed forces was the main task of preparing the Invasion, and it could hardly be solved by a formal instruction - even if the Fuhrer.

The "Alternative" by K. Maxi is interesting only from one point of view: in it, the Germans, whether it's good or bad, are seriously preparing a landing, and are not waiting for the first convenient excuse to abandon it altogether (as happened in the Current Reality). Of course, not in July and not in August, but at the end of September, Operation Sea Lion could well have taken place. The Germans would have landed in England and held a foothold, although the intensity of the fighting in the Dover area and in Lyme Bay would have reminded the participants of Verdun, and modern historians of Stalingrad. In six to eight weeks from the beginning of the operation, already in December, the Germans would have broken out into the operational space and, probably, would have captured, in fact, England. But the losses incurred in people, equipment and time would not have given the Germans the opportunity to disrupt the withdrawal of the British army to Scotland. As a result, the campaign in the Isles would have dragged on indefinitely, with the communication line of the German expeditionary force in the Isles remaining under the continuous influence of the light forces of the English fleet. Why this version of Reality is so good for the Germans is hard to understand. The same war on two fronts, even more costly ... the Americans will be based in Ireland and northern Scotland, in 1944, instead of the Overlord, England will be liberated and, at the same time, landing in Denmark and

-5- The operation that could actually take Great Britain out of the war (at least give the Germans the entire British Isles, rather than really make it difficult for the United States to "include" the war in Europe) is much more complex. The corresponding plan was developed by me, A. Vasiliev, F. Delgado and R. Ismailov in preparation for publication of the second volume of the historical "alterna 50

tiv, edited by K. Maxi. In the chapter devoted to the "fork in 1940", the English historian offered a particular version of the version already considered in the first volume. It was boring to reconstruct this bastard Reality again, and, as a negation of the "Sea Lion", an operational scheme was created, called the "Northern Gambit". In this version, the Hitlerite

command from the very beginning refuses to understand the landing in England as a purely military action to "force a big river", and this is precisely the change in Reality.

In a sense, "Sea Lion" will continue to exist, but now as a "shadow" of the main operation, its information cover. All the small "bells and whistles" are used to speed up preparations somewhere: an order for heavy gliders, ferries and tank landing barges is issued in a timely manner, an inventory of the ports of Europe and the German coast itself is carried out in order to search for free tonnage, Luftwaffe squadrons are relocated to the coast. With all this, by the end of July, the command comes to the understanding that it will not be possible to ensure the readiness of the troops for the operation before the end of September by any human or inhuman efforts. And then the Fuhrer, who previously authorized the exceptionally successful April landing operations in Denmark and Norway, orders a landing in England "in the late autumn of 1940 - in the days of fog and storms on the English Channel",

timed the active phase to coincide with the presidential elections in the United States and the October Revolution in the

USSR. Preparations must be completed by November 1st. The landing will be carried out on a wide front - from Cornwall to Folkestone, the command of the ground forces is carried out by the headquarters of Army Group "A" Rundstedt, the overall leadership is entrusted to the command of the OKL, that is, to Göring and Eschonnek. "Finally, the last one. During the spring offensive in France, diversion operations in Denmark and, especially, in Norway, justified themselves. In this regard, I propose to precede the English landing with active operations in northern Europe - in Iceland, - Hitler sharply pursed his lips, his smile disappeared, a short nervous sigh made it clear to the listener that the dictator's monologue was over, and with it all the debate about the impossibility of the operation.

51

It is clear that such a complex multilateral strategy required, in order to ensure it, at least the intensification of the actions of the Italians in the Mediterranean Sea (which is achieved by the operation of the German special services against Badoglio) and the replacement of the Kriegsmarine command, which was not at all disposed to risk all the ships of the German fleet without exception for the sake of one operations. It is also understandable that the extra time provided the Luftwaffe with the opportunity to introduce some elements of a tactical game into its air supremacy efforts. In September and October, two simulations of the invasion were carried out with the switching of the actions of German aviation to roads and communication centers. During October, the ships of the future German Polar Fleet were concentrated in Trondheim, and in all cases the impression was created of forced actions taken in connection with British air raids. "The first to go to sea were the Danish battleship Niels Yuel and the Norwegian

destroyer Tiger. Already at sea, their teams learned that the ships were heading to Reykjavik on a special diplomatic mission. Probably, most of the sailors decided that we were talking about going over to the side of the Allies.

The next morning the transport submarine U 139 left Trondheim, the accompanying transport began moving twelve hours later. The purpose of this group of ships (compound A4) was demonstration operations in the area of Jan Mainen Island. No point in capturing Yang. These ships are much

¹ more than Schivindt called Halder. In German ports there are many destroyers, destroyers and auxiliary ships from the First World War and even earlier. In three months, they could be brought into a state that allows you to go to sea (at least once). It was possible to drastically speed up the repair of the Scharnhorst and Gneisenau damaged in the Norwegian campaign, bring the completed battleship Bismarck (without a fire control system) and the heavy cruiser Prince Eugen to a marching state. Finally, the Wehrmacht captured Norwegian and Dutch warships in 1940. The combat capabilities of this whole panopticon cannot be exaggerated, but the "general mobilization" gave Germany the opportunity once - for a decisive three or four days - to have a fairly balanced fleet capable of supporting the "English operation".

52

There was no Mainen, which is why the Fuhrer, prone to paradoxes, decided to land a small landing group there. "Submariners" were supposed to operate at night. In the dark, they had to overcome the surf, gather on the shore and covertly seize the pier, to which in the morning a transport with two landing companies would moor.

("This is impossible," said the commander of the boat, "the group will die during night landing.

- Do you think that lifeboats can only be used during the day and in perfect weather? - surprised Arrens, the former commander of the Bremen liner of the commercial fleet, promoted to rear admiral and

appointed commander of the airborne formation.)

On November 1, at 23.00, the battleships left the port. Tsiliaks warned the crews that it was about the next firing practice, which would be combined with tests of the maneuverability of the Bismarck and Prinz Eugen and would last no more than a day. In fact, on November 2, the ships headed for Iceland.

In Iceland and the Faroe Islands, landings from "flying boats" were widely used - not only the fleet, but also the Reich aviation was used in this operation with the maximum load. No reserves were allocated: nothing was left in the ports or at the airfields on the decisive days.

Having landed part of the troops in Reykjavik, "Bremen" and "Europe", accompanied by the German Polar Fleet, headed to the southeast. November 7, on the day "D", they stood on the roadstead of

the Irish city of Cork. "On the night of November 7th, the inhabitants of the city of Penzance, located on the Cornwall peninsula, thirty kilometers from Cape Guennap, were awakened by another, third in the last month and a half, imitation trick of the Germans, who, apparently, were trying with all their might to divert attention from the Reykjavik area. After the "demonstrations" in September and October in Cornwall, no one - from the commander of the defense of the district to the last sapper on duty near the land mine laid under the airfield facilities - no longer believed in the possibility of landing. The 7th Parachute Division completed its task and suffered almost no losses at this stage of the operation.

For Churchill and Ironside, the landing also came as a complete surprise, and for some time

53

nor were they even inclined to regard it as some kind of red herring. Only towards the middle of the day, when it became clear that the Germans were fighting almost the entire southern tip of England - from Cape Lizard to Yarmouth, when in Cornwall and on the coast of Lyme Bay there was already a clear success of the attackers, who connected tactical bridgeheads into operational ones and began to penetrate deep into British territory, when an attempt by the Portsmouth Flotilla to bombard the bridgehead and destroy the landing craft resulted in the death of two destroyers that fell under the blows of dive bombers from Cherbourg, when it turned out that British fighters were not in the air, despite Churchill's direct appeals to Dowding - only then did the top leadership Great Britain become convinced that it was dealing with a serious enemy operation. With the beginning of the Battle of South England, a sharp complication of the

political situation in the Republic of Ireland coincided. At two o'clock in the afternoon, Dublin unexpectedly demanded, in an ultimatum form, the withdrawal of British troops "from the territory of a single and indivisible Ireland." At 4 o'clock it became clear that a military coup was taking place in Eyre. And two hours later, Churchill learned that this coup was supported by the landing of German troops in the port of Cork. (...)

On November 17, on the tenth day of the landing and on the second day of the storm in the English Channel, Rundstedt launched a decisive offensive. The infantry corps of the 3rd and 6th armies covered London. Hoth's tank corps, entered near Salisbury in a "clean" breakthrough, already in the evening of the next day captured Oxford and

the bridge over the Thames. On the 20th, von Rundstedt issued the last operational order of the English campaign: "The enemy defense is falling apart. I order, without being distracted by the London grouping of the enemy, to pursue the British troops in the general direction of Birmingham. In

such an operation, where Iceland, the Faroe Islands (temporarily), Liverpool (the last target of the landing group

¹ See appendix, scheme 1.

54

Arrens), Southern Ireland annexes Northern Ireland and becomes a satellite of the Reich, the landing takes place on a very wide front - and precisely at the moment when the main forces of the English fleet are stretched between Greenland and Norway, trying to intercept German ships that unexpectedly went to sea - the British will not be able to take organized withdrawal, and the Islands would be lost entirely. In the United States, the question of the legality of Roosevelt's third consecutive ballot will inevitably be raised, as a result of which the president, even if he is not ridiculous, will lose his freedom of action and become a hostage of the isolationists. Fascist Germany will establish complete dominance in Western Europe and come very close to complete victory in World War II...

Is this option realistic? From a formal military point of view - quite 1 . But in order to decide

¹ "... in real military history, there are more than enough examples of successful, absolutely crazy operations. And the point is not at all that "unprecedented things happen", but that the generally accepted idea, upon careful examination, very often turns out to be superficial and does not correspond to reality. Is it impossible to land troops directly from transports on an unequipped coast? But excuse me, the Japanese in 1941-42 did just that! Is it impossible to lead a caravan of hundreds of barges through the strait, where enemy destroyers are found? But one destroyer will have a dozen barges, and besides, they still need to be found in the dark (and the radar, with skillful jamming, will show several hundred more barges and a battleship to boot) ... Yes, an operation in which the same forces without returning several landings in different places are carried out one after another at the base, it looks like something fantastic. But after all, in the alternative presented, the Germans landed various units that were on board huge liners. Meanwhile, the Japanese sometimes managed to land *the same* troops from island to island, from unloading to reloading. A much more significant problem is the supply of the landed units - especially in

remote bridgeheads. But here the "Tokyo Express" to Guadalcanal or the supply of Sevastopol with the help of destroyers and submarines immediately come to mind. Yes, in both cases, the operations ended in defeat - but only because they lasted for several months. The Germans must capture England in a few weeks. (V. Goncharov. Comments on Operation Northern Gambit.) 55

on it, firstly, it was required to take colossal risks *again* . For such actions, - wrote the great chess player A. Alekhine on a similar occasion, "courage, but also blindness" is needed. And the Germans - after the French campaign - had something to lose. And, secondly, the German commanders would have to give up so many of their beliefs. But then they wouldn't be Germans.

The fifth plot: "Barbarossa" - planning for defeat -1 - In the

Current Reality, the Wehrmacht began to develop alternative plans for pressure on England even before the final failure of the "Sea Lion" was determined, that is, in the summer of 1940. It seemed very

tempting to seize Gibraltar. In addition to its enormous moral implications, such a victory would lead to the strategic isolation of the Mediterranean and North European theaters of war. In any case, the British would have lost the opportunity to keep a fleet in Gibraltar capable of quickly advancing to either of these two theaters and deciding the outcome of the battle there. Yes, and sending reinforcements to Malta and the Middle East would be decidedly difficult. For the assault on Gibraltar,

heavy guns, selected infantry, and, most importantly, permission from the caudillo Franco to let the troops pass through their territory were needed. The head of Spain, no doubt, would only be happy to pay for the help,

rendered to him by Hitler and Mussolini during the civil war, but he understood that such a step meant a war with Great Britain, which for Spain - with its huge coastline and completely incapacitated fleet - would be fatal. So, in chess language, Gibraltar was indirectly protected - and precisely by the dominance of Great Britain at sea. Franco diplomatically demanded for his

56

the action of Morocco and Oran, knowing that Hitler considered this absolutely unacceptable. In addition, Hitler considered Spain as one of the channels for Germany to receive strategically important goods and did not want to drag her into the war and the British blockade zone; Franco's polite answer suited the dictator quite well. On this, the Gibraltar strategy of the Reich, in essence, ended, although its theoretical development continued in the German General Staff until the end of 1942. Both

Franco and Hitler were captured by a funny optical illusion. The British "Grand Fleet" of the "1914 model of the year" had the opportunity, by concentrating a superior dreadnought fleet in the North Sea, to send entire squadrons of old, allegedly useless battleships and cruisers to secondary theaters of military operations. But the "Home Fleet" of 1939, a child of the "policy of economy", was not able to simultaneously cover the Islands from invasion, the ocean from German raiders, the Mediterranean Sea from the Italian fleet, and even block the Spanish coast. For this, there were not physically enough ships. In full accordance with the principles of strategy, according to which the expansion of the space of the conflict is beneficial to those who have the initiative, the involvement of Spain in the war would (in the summer-autumn of 1940) be useful only to the Reich. As in the case of the German refusal of a direct landing on the English coast, it was no longer dominion over the sea that saved Britain, but the memory of this dominion.

The capture or neutralization of Gibraltar in a number of cases turned out to be a very important operation, but by no means decisive. Actions in Egypt were considered a more reliable means of putting pressure on England: the mastery of this key territory, including the Suez Canal, access to Palestine and further to the oil-bearing Middle East. Since the premier

¹ And the sooner such an operation is started, the better for Germany. The opportunity to "click" on Franco or bargain with him (at least offer the same Gibraltar after the war) was enough. Large forces were not required to capture Gibraltar (although scarce heavy artillery was needed). The start of this operation would have diverted the British fleet from the Isles, which could be used to organize an invasion both within the framework of the Sea Lion and in the logic of the Northern Gambit. 57

Iraqi Minister Rashid Ali was preparing an uprising against British rule, and the rest of the Arab territories were pro-German, such a plan looks quite reasonable. The loss of Egypt might not have

been fatal for Great Britain, but the position of Winston Churchill's government would have deteriorated catastrophically, and it is not obvious that Sir Winston would have managed to keep the chair of prime minister. This, of course, does not mean that supporters of an agreement with Hitler would necessarily come to power. In the summer and autumn of 1940, there were few such people in Great Britain, and they did not hold significant posts. Historians usually point to Lord Halifax and the Cliveland Cabal, but the political position of the former appeasers after September 1939 changed significantly. Germany threatened the "permanent interests" of England, this was understood by the entire British establishment. This means that peace could only be signed as an acknowledgment of a total military defeat that threatens the physical existence of the nation. The fall of Egypt has never seen such a threat.

created.

On the other hand, the change of Churchill's cabinet would inevitably have weakened Britain's military efforts. The objective reality was that there was simply no military and political leader of a comparable scale in the country. So, having achieved the fall of W. Churchill, the Reich would have won an important political victory. Realizing this, King George VI, apparently, would have used his prerogatives in the interests

of Sir Winston, violating a number of unwritten agreements between the branches of government. This would lead to a constitutional crisis in England, but... in this case, the exploration of an alternative political Reality has taken us too far, and it is time to break this tact.

analysis.

From a formal point of view, a defeat in Egypt would lead to the fact that the English fleet would be forced out of the eastern sector of the Mediterranean. The route from the Indian Ocean to Europe would increase by 8,000 kilometers, which is equivalent to a 2-4 times decrease in the used tonnage. Neither in the First nor in the Second World War did the reduction in cargo turnover, caused by the actions of German submarines and surface raiders on communications, come close

58

match those numbers. Meanwhile, India and Southeast Asia were the main areas for the UK to receive much-needed dollar revenue right now.

The loss of oil in the Middle East was a serious but not fatal problem for the British Empire. For their part, the Germans would receive an important, but poorly connected with the territory of the Reich, a source of resources. The military and economic balance would shift in their favor, but by no means in a decisive way. Perhaps the most important achievement for the Germans would be the ability to create a threat to the Soviet Transcaucasus.

The possibility of achieving far-reaching results in the eastern Mediterranean in 1940 is beyond doubt. But political factors also intervened here: the Mediterranean was the domain of Mussolini, who in the summer and autumn of 1940 was by no means ready to call on German troops for help. The headquarters of the OKH was a categorical opponent of the "peripheral strategy", the position of the OKW was of no interest to anyone, and Hitler on the "Egyptian

plan" did not insist.

It was assumed that the Italians themselves would seize dominance in the Mediterranean and its environs, especially since they had the opportunity to do so. By the fall of 1940, the British had 6 battleships in the Mediterranean theater, of which only one was any modern, 3 aircraft carriers, 11 cruisers, 12 submarines and three destroyer fleets (according to various sources, 25-29 pieces). Connection "H" - a new battleship, an aircraft carrier and 9 destroyers - was based on Gibraltar and, as long as the threat of an invasion of the British Isles, could be used in the eastern Mediterranean only in an emergency. Italy also had 6 battleships, two of them the newest, but otherwise its fleet was many times superior to English: 8 heavy, 11 light cruisers, 97 submarines, 53 destroyers, not counting obsolete ships, which were also enough. Even more significant superiority in the Mediterranean theater had the Italian ground forces. In Egypt in the summer of 1940 there were about 30 thousand British infantrymen, another 20 thousand remained in Palestine. To these figures must be added
another 30,000 sols.

59

dates in the rest of the Middle East and either add or subtract 31 thousand

people in the Egyptian army (who are not counted by any statistics: neither English, nor German, nor even Italian). The Italians had 415 thousand people throughout East Africa (up to 600 thousand with native formations), Graziani's army of 236 thousand people was concentrated against Egypt, although only 75 thousand of them were located directly at the front. Throughout the summer of 1940, the parties limited

themselves to harassing actions, and during this period the British lost 150 people, while the Italians - about 3,000. On September 13, they finally went over to a kind of offensive, advanced 80 kilometers, which was about half desert", separating the positions of the parties, and set about building a chain of fortified camps.

While the Germans were imposingly preparing an invasion of the Islands, assuming that the Italians were within a hair's breadth of conquering Egypt and establishing dominance in the Mediterranean, and the war would soon end, the British leadership in London coped with the shock of defeat, transferred the economy to war footing and began to expand the scale of the war. W. Churchill, with his love for manifestations of activity, transferred three tank regiments to Africa from the mother country, including almost all the new Matilda tanks. And Andrew Cunningham, the last of the great English admirals, was preparing to transfer the war to enemy waters, bearing in mind that the first combat clashes at sea, the Italian fleet lost without any problems. On October

28, for some reason, the Italian army invaded Greece, which, although it was set up pro-English, kept firm neutrality. Nothing came of this operation. The Italians, not having a decisive superiority in strength and mobility, advanced in difficult mountainous terrain against a determined enemy defending his territory and occupying a specially prepared fortified position. Already in early November, the Italians were driven back to Albania, the army commander was removed, and the chief of the general staff resigned. Meanwhile, E. Cunningham from the Illustrious aircraft carrier struck at the main

Italian naval base Ta

60

ranto. For a modern reader who knows about the decisive role of aircraft carriers in the war at sea, who has heard about Pearl Harbor, the Philippines and Okinawa, this is not surprising. But, firstly, Taranto was under the cover of almost the entire Italian base aviation. Secondly, the aircraft based on the Illustrious had outstanding flying qualities ... according to the criteria of the First World War. The Swordfish torpedo bomber, a

canvas-skinned biplane, had a top speed of 246 kilometers per hour (for example, the American Devastator, which was also considered hopelessly outdated, did almost 100 kilometers per hour more 1). The Swordfish, however, was distinguished by extraordinary maneuverability, but in combat conditions this did not help him much. These "attack aircraft" were covered by Sea Gladiator fighters. Also biplanes, they were inferior in speed, for example, to the Messerschmitt one and a half times.

You had to be a genius or crazy to have such a deck aircraft to attack the fortified base of the enemy.

On November 11, 1940, torpedo bombers were raised from the deck of the aircraft carrier Illustrious, a total of 21 aircraft. They attacked the Italian ships in Taranto and, at the cost of only two aircraft, disabled three enemy battleships. Although even after that the Italians had a certain superiority in strength, the question of supremacy at sea was resolved once and for all.

The attack on Taranto had less resonance than Trafalgar, but the consequences of these naval operations are commensurate. After September 11, only German aviation could create known difficulties for E. Cunningham, but certainly not the Italian fleet.

Now2 Malta, a walled island halfway through the
between Sicily and Tunisia, brie base

¹ In the Battle of Midway Atoll, the Americans deployed 41 Devastators. 35 of them were shot down by Japanese interceptors. There were no torpedo hits.

² While the Italians claimed dominance in the Mediterranean, the need to mandatory hold all three key points in the Mediterranean - Malta, Gibraltar, Alexandria - was rather burdensome for the British fleet.

61



Fascist bloc in June 1941

62

Tang destroyers and submarines. Any convoy sent from Italy to Africa was under attack from the Maltese strike formations.

A heavy defeat at sea immediately echoed on land. On November 22, the Greeks launched a counteroffensive in Albania, crushed the resistance of the Italians and captured a huge amount of military equipment. On December 8, Wavell attacked the gap between the Italian fortified camps in the desert, broke through the defenses and the next morning took the Nibeiwa camp from the rear. On the same day, the Tummar West and Tummar East camps were taken, and the escape routes were cut off for the Italian troops. Already on December 11, the number of Italian prisoners reached 40 thousand people with 400 guns. On January 6, Bardia fell (45 thousand people, 462 guns, 129 tanks), on January 22 - Tobruk (another 20 thousand prisoners).

It may seem surprising, but the German command looked at the complete failure of its ally's Mediterranean strategy with Olympian calm. Even in the early autumn, the leadership of the OKH abandoned attempts to conquer Egypt in favor of a completely different operation.

On July 28, 1940, Grand Admiral Raeder, who was supposed to be fully loaded with Sea Lion affairs, presented A. Hitler with a memorandum "Considerations on Russia": *"The military forces of the Russian army must be considered immeasurably weaker than ours, who have war experience. The capture of the area up to the Ladoga-Smolensk-Crimea line is militarily possible, and peace conditions will be dictated from this area. The left flank, which will break through the Baltic states, will establish contact with the Finns on Lake Ladoga in a short time. With the occupation of the coast and Leningrad, the resistance force of the Russian fleet will collapse by itself.* Raeder even believed that this operation could be carried out in the autumn of 1940 (obviously, instead of landing in England).

This "operational plan" would not be worth taking seriously if

its author played a slightly smaller role in the opera

63

walkie talkie "Sea Lion"¹. We have to accept that Raeder was ready to throw the German ground units into any adventure, just to distract the Fuhrer's attention from "his" ships. Unfortunately for the Reich, the grand admiral's ideas met with recognition and understanding in the OKH. Oddly

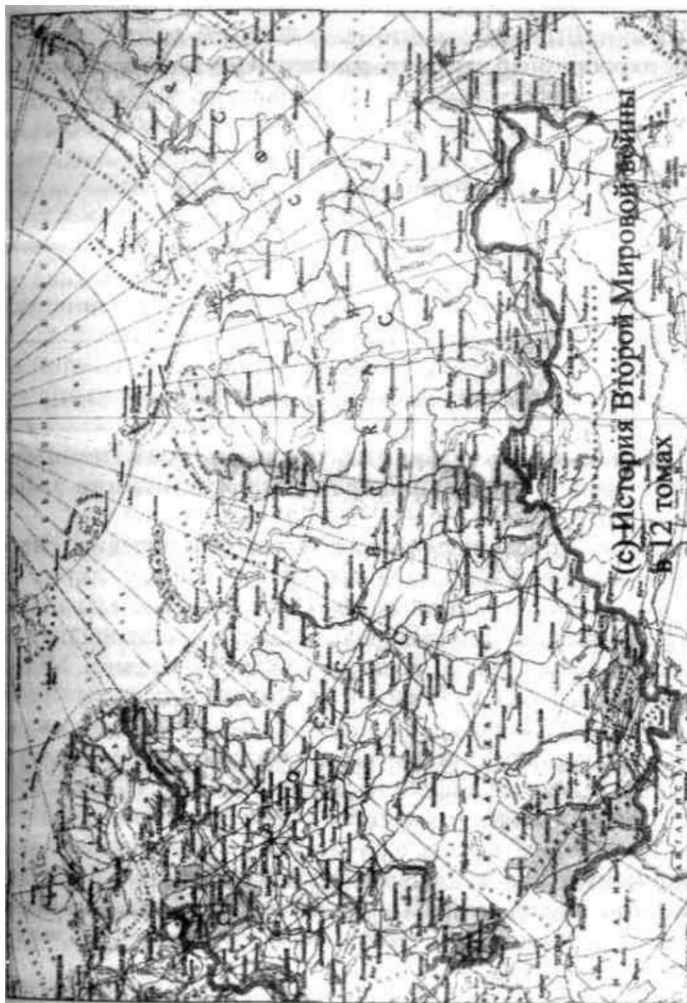
enough, the high command of the ground forces (and Hitler himself) considered the aggression against the USSR not as an independent campaign, but as an episode in the struggle against England. Accordingly, at first there was no talk of any struggle not for life, but for death.

Here it makes sense to focus on one curious aberration of perception that often occurred (and still occurs) among the leaders of the West when they have to deal with Russia. Hitler, and before him Napoleon, viewed Russia as an Asian state. This should not be understood in a pejorative sense for us, just the great conquerors proceeded from the fact that the European "showdowns" do not concern "Holy Rus" or concern them to a minimal extent. Accordingly, the presence of Russia's "position" in relation to European affairs was inspired by England. Thus, the war against Russia is a blow to England. As soon as the Russian leadership realizes that the war will cost their country quite dearly, it will change its orientation to an anti-English one, the "treacherous Albion" will lose its last ally on the continent and understand the futility of the war. The reasoning, of course, is primitive, but in general, the war with Russia was presented to both Hitler and Napoleon in approximately the same colors.

The Army Headquarters was only too happy to return from the highly conflicted, risky, coordinated work of three independent commands of the operation in England in favor of the classic land strategy, for which there were Schlieffen's developments and detailed analyzes of the 1930s.

¹ Raeder's note, of course, was not of an official nature. But, we note, the "Vasilevsky note" was just as unofficial, but on the basis of which a number of authors draw far-reaching conclusions about the plans of the Soviet Union to attack peaceful, friendly Germany. At any level of consideration, the Reich is ahead of the USSR in preparing for war ...

64



USSR June 22, 1941

65

All operational schemes were built on the assumption of the deployment of German troops on the territory of East Prussia, Poland (governor general) and Romania. It turned out that the theater of operations is funnel-shaped, expanding to the east, and the size of Russia excludes even the theoretical possibility of its occupation in one campaign. However, within the framework of ideas about Russia as a paid ally of Great Britain, this was not required. The first of the proposed military plans

was, perhaps, the most interesting of all the developments of the OKH on the future Barbarossa. It was supposed to deliver the main blow to Moscow with the forces of the "group of tank armies" from the 16th tank and 34th infantry divisions. It must be borne in mind that this was still a reality of the "1940 model" divisions with 324 tanks each, that is, more than 5,000 tanks were to attack Moscow directly.

This operational scheme was immediately rejected: the Germans did not have the means of control for organizing such an ambitious association as the "group of tank armies". It also seemed doubtful whether it would be possible to supply an exceptionally powerful mobile group using the only railway line. In August 1940, General Marks, the chief of staff of the 18th

Army, presented his plan to the "specialist in Russia". Marx proposed to deal two blows - on Moscow and on Kyiv. He was one of the first to draw attention to the inevitable gap between the adjacent flanks of the advancing groupings. This gap was caused by a roadless and cut through by rivers with marshy floodplains.

"Pripyat hole". According to Marx, the Russians could concentrate forces in the Pripyat marshes and counterattack the flanks of the advancing German units. This was supposed to be avoided by a quick advance with the establishment of a close connection of the German operational groupings on the left bank of the Dnieper.

Lossberg, overseeing the project from the OKW, suggested adding an independent army group in the north, setting her the task of cooperating with the Finns. Zoddershern, Rundstedt's chief of staff, proposed a very beautiful asymmetric plan, providing for the strategic "Cannes" of all European Russia. Osu's Grand Reach

66

Army Group North (21 tank and motorized, 46 infantry divisions) advanced through Daugavpils-Smolensk. The group "South" - 9 mobile, 37 infantry divisions - was moving towards it through Kyiv. In the center, restrictive actions were planned.

This beautiful plan went back to the idea of Fankelheim-Ludendorff on the Eastern Front in 1915 and, to a certain extent, relied on the experience of the Polish campaign of 1939. The General Staff rejected Zoddern's plan, based on the difficulties of management (the "group of tank armies" resurfaces) and the pretentiousness of the movement of the northern group: due to the lack of space in East Prussia for the deployment of 67 divisions, the troops moved east, then moved north, making room for the second echelon, and at the final stage turned to the south.

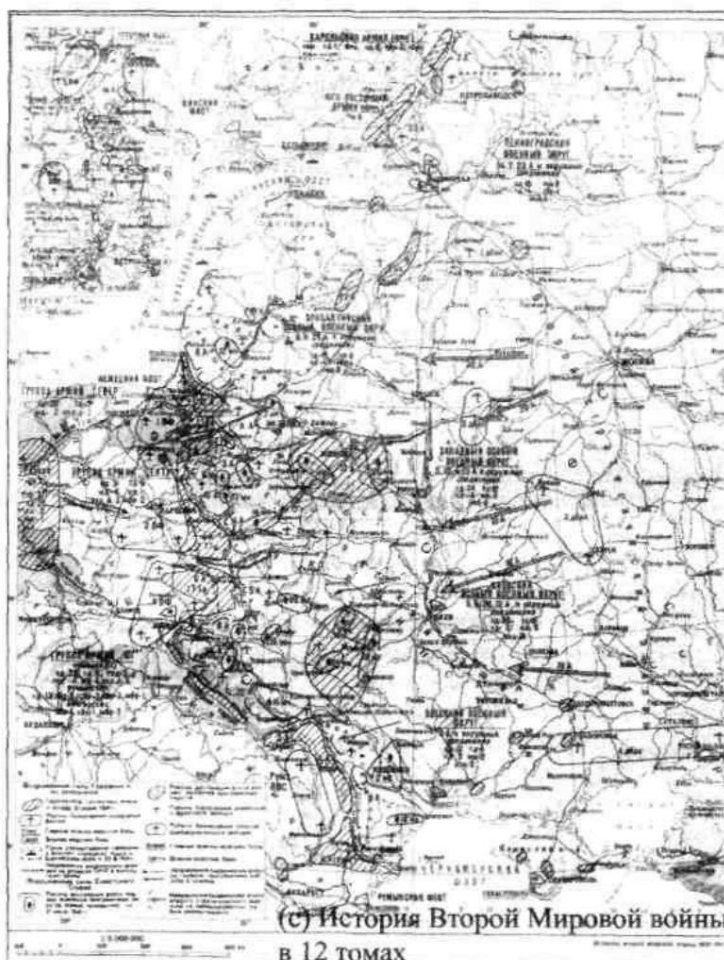
All these difficulties could have been avoided by organizing a large landing but operation in the Baltic such an opportunity by the German military leadership States¹ was not considered at all.

Be that as it may, the Zoddern plan for the first time drew the attention of the Nazi leadership to the natural defensive line of the Western Dvina (Daugava)-Dnieper and the problems that this line creates.

On September 3, 1940, General Paulus, who was appointed the first Chief Quartermaster of the General Staff, took up the planning of the Russian campaign. By the end of October, he submitted a memorandum "Fundamentals of the Russian Campaign" to the OKH. The General Staff worked out the task in a month, and on December 5 the Otto plan was presented to Hitler, who two weeks later signed Directive No. 21 for the strategic deployment of

Barbarossa. Information about the enemy, his troops and, especially, the reserves were completely insufficient. Paulus guessed the composition of the first Russian strategic echelon, estimating it at 125

¹ We are talking about a scale comparable to the landing in England: landing troops capture Riga, bridges over the Daugava, the islands of the Moosun archipelago and the Pärnu region. A military grouping consisting (in different versions) of one or two armies and two or three mobile divisions is transferred to the prepared bridgeheads in two or three waves. 67



Deployment of the Barbarossa Plan

68

hot divisions and 50 mobile brigades, which roughly corresponded to 170 counting divisions that the Red Army deployed on the western border, but the number of "estimated" tanks and aircraft differed from the real figures at times, and the planning authorities of the OKH had no idea about the second strategic echelon. staff games held by

Paulus Three convincingly demonstrated that even with the most favorable assumptions about the enemy (representing a gross planning error, and even made in the "dangerous" direction), the available German forces are still not enough. There was no question of forcing the Western Dvina-Dnieper line; it was necessary at all costs to win a decisive victory to the west of this line. Paulus decided to achieve this goal with a simultaneous offensive along the entire front. The operation was supposed to start on May 15, 1941.

-3- One of the myths of World War II is the assessment of the Barbarossa plan. It is interesting that Soviet, German and Anglo-American historians show touching unanimity in this. The twelve-volume "History of the Second World War" mildly scolds the German plans for adventurism, but this criticism is not so much related to the technical side of the plan, but to the very decision of Hitler to attack the USSR¹. Otherwise, it is believed that the German generals, with experience in modern warfare, created an ideal deployment scheme, which, to a large extent, predetermined. It is interesting to note that with the limited

¹ size of France and its excellent road network, the Germans built the 1940 campaign as two consecutive operations. Manstein's proposal to achieve all strategic outcomes in one decisive blow

was considered a gamble and rejected. Now, in 1941, Paulus considers the complete defeat of the USSR within the framework of one operation as possible and even necessary. Neither huge distances, nor impassability, nor Russian resistance in the occupied territories (even if passive) are taken into account. 69

lo and catastrophic for the Soviet troops the results of the Battle of the Border and the entire first period of the

war. German memoirists actively discuss Hitler's mistakes in the second stage of the campaign, but practically do not touch on Barbarossa. The exception is E. Manstein, who, however, only hints at the inadequacy of the German deployment.

In fact, the Barbarossa plan is so bad that one involuntarily asks oneself how one should lead the troops in order to be completely defeated when faced with it?

The main blow was delivered in the central direction, where 48 divisions were deployed on a 500-kilometer front, of which 10 were mobile. The auxiliary attack on Kyiv in a strip of 1,250 kilometers was provided by 49 divisions (7 mobile). This number includes the troops of the allies, primarily the Romanian ones, whose number at the front will increase over time. In the north, a group was deployed, in the amount of two armies (29 divisions, of which 5 were tank and motorized), which were not assigned a meaningful operational task at all.

Such a "uniform and proportionate" deployment is not ensured decisive success on none of the a posteriori, the

¹ suicidal nature of this decision is obvious. But even within the framework of the information that Hitler had in the summer of 1940-spring of 1941, Operation Barbarossa must be qualified as a mistake. Germany not only tied up its troops in the east in an area deprived of roads, from where units and formations, with all the desire, could not be quickly "pulled out", but also lost its economic "window to the world". Germany could receive from the neutral Soviet Union any materials it needed for the war. In war conditions, something could be taken for free (the Ost plan), but the rest could be forgotten. The British blockade became absolute. One has to hear that Hitler was afraid of raw material dependence on the USSR, but trade relations form *mutual* dependencies, which the Fuhrer of the German nation must have guessed. Talk about the "bestial hatred" that Hitler had for the USSR is not relevant at all: Germany's policy has always been purely pragmatic, and the "racial theory" did not at all prevent an alliance with the Japanese or Romanians (who are on the list of "subhuman" much lower than the Russians).). Apparently, the only real justification for "Barbarossa" is in Hitler's complete confidence in the transience of the campaign, and the rapid restoration of trade relations. 70

boards. Moreover, if the strongest of the German army groups - the Center group - could quickly win the operation to encircle and destroy the Soviet troops in Belarus and advance to Smolensk, both of its flanks would hang in the air, and the right would be open to any counterattacks from the region of the Pripyat "hole", which there was nothing to occupy or control.

It was supposed to complete the destruction of the main forces of the Russian army by the 20th day of the war, when the front line of the offensive of the Wehrmacht would stretch from Pärnu through Pskov, Velikie Luki, Orsha, Mozyr, and then along the coast of the Dnieper. At this position, a twenty-day pause was envisaged, then a final attack on Moscow, during which it was supposed to destroy the last 30-40 Russian divisions. This phase of the campaign, however, was not worked out at all

in the plan. Speaking of "Barbarossa", the Arkhangelsk-Astrakhan line is often mentioned. In reality, the OKH did not plan to move beyond Moscow. The phrase about the position "Arkhangelsk - Astrakhan" belongs to Hitler, who considered this line to be optimal for peace negotiations, since the Russian

the strategic production base in the Urals is within the reach of German aviation¹ .

-4- While the

leadership of the Wehrmacht was "slowly and methodically" working out various plans for a war against the USSR, in English

¹ It is even difficult to comment correctly. What airfields on the Arkhangelsk-Astrakhan line did the Germans intend to use? How to provide these airfields with fuel and ammunition? Which planes were planned to be used to suppress the Urals (given that the Luftwaffe was unable to overcome the geographically simpler task of destroying English cities, which is not surprising: German aviation was created as a means of air support for the field army, and not as a tool to influence the economic and demographic potential enemy within the Douai doctrine)? It was, of course, only about the demarcation line between fascist Europe and Asiatic Russia. The OKH had nothing to do with this purely *political* issue.

⁷¹

On the Liysk front, the "strange war" began again. The difference is that if in the winter of 1939-1940 the Germans won operational time, and the Allies lost it, now everything was exactly the opposite. The British recovered from the catastrophe in France and Norway. They seized dominance in the Mediterranean and defeated Mussolini's troops in Egypt and Ethiopia. Italy turned from a strategic resource of the Reich into its main weakness. As the impression of German victories wore off, Great Britain, having ensured (at least temporarily) the integrity of its empire, became the center of attraction for all anti-fascist and anti-German forces in the world.

Operation "Catapult" led to the fact that Vichy France lost the fleet, and with it the colonial empire (which was gradually taken over by the supporters of General De Gaulle). Having lost the colonies, Pétain ceased to be a subject of international relations, whose position - for example, with the declared neutrality - had to be reckoned with.

In other words, Great Britain brilliantly won the summer-autumn campaign of 1940, and the Reich, which lost its offensive pace from scratch, convincingly demonstrated to the world the truth of chess: "he who has an advantage *must* attack under the threat of losing this advantage."

After the defeat of Graziani's army in Libya and heavy defeats in Greece, Mussolini stopped trying to "save face" and turned to Hitler with a request for urgent help. For their part, the German command came to the conclusion that "something must be done" in the Mediterranean theater of operations, and it was no longer a question of a decisive victory, but of restoring prestige. In

early February 1941, General Rommel, formerly commander of the 7th Panzer Division, one of the most skillful and successful military leaders of the Reich, was sent to Tripoli. Rommel was appointed commander of the Africa Panzer Corps, which consisted of the 15th Panzer and 5th Motorized Divisions, the main forces of which were to arrive in Tripoli at the end of May. Without waiting for the concentration of forces, Rommel immediately went on the offensive, using Volkswagen cars to indicate the supposedly advancing

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esya in the deep rear of the British tank columns. The English 8th Army was completely unprepared for the resumption of the battle in Cyrenaica and suffered a heavy defeat. By April 11, the British were driven back beyond the Egyptian border (with the exception of the surrounded fortress of Tobruk).

The main forces of Nazi Germany at that time were deployed against Russia, with the exception of the 12th Army and the 1st Panzer Group, which were tasked with defeating the main forces of the Greek army. The coup of Simovic in Yugoslavia and the conclusion of an agreement with the USSR by the new government

(Hitler assumed that with Great Britain as well) dramatically changed the situation in the Balkans and forced the Germans to take a very risky step. On April 6, the Wehrmacht attacked Yugoslavia and Greece simultaneously. Since Yugoslavia was in an alliance with the USSR, which the Germans knew about, and the attack was undertaken without the necessary consultations with the Soviet side, crossing the border of Yugoslavia, Hitler placed himself completely dependent on the goodwill of Stalin. In fact, Germany violated the Peace and Border Treaty and thereby provided the USSR with the opportunity to break the Non-Aggression Pact.

Stalin, however, did not react in any way to the Balkan crisis, and everything ended very well for the Germans. The Yugoslav army did not have time to either concentrate or mobilize, and was destroyed in 11 days. The war with Greece and the English troops who came to her aid was a little longer, but by the end of April it had already reached the "second Dunkirk"¹. True, this "historic victory" did not improve, and in the hot spring of 1941 there were

¹several more hot military clashes. On March 28, the Italian fleet suffered another defeat in the battle at Cape Matapan and was finally locked in its base. In the last ten days of May, the German paratroopers convincingly demonstrated that the "Sea Lion" was quite possible: with the dominance of the enemy at sea, the Wehrmacht successfully carried out an amphibious operation to capture Crete. The Germans lost three times fewer people than the British, but Hitler found the losses of the elite airborne troops completely unacceptable, which led to many important consequences and, in particular, to the abandonment of the assault on Malta. Finally, on May 27, the Germans lost their newest and best ship, the battleship Bismarck, during their first military campaign.⁷³

worsened the strategic position of the Reich by tying it up. troops on the railroad-poor territory of the Balkan Peninsula. On April 30, Hitler was forced

to delay the start of the attack on the USSR for five weeks. It took too long to release the 1st Panzer Army, too many tanks needed repairs.

Part 2 OKH WAR

The first plot: failed defeat (the Bunich-Suvorov plan in action) -1 - The strategic

space continues to expand. If in September 1939 the conflict was of a rather local nature, then in April-May 1940 the fire of war engulfed Europe, and after Italy entered the war, the Mediterranean Sea. From this point on, the pattern of struggle becomes more complicated. First, B. Mussolini becomes a strategizing subject for some, albeit short, time. He immediately extends hostilities to the Balkan Peninsula and North Africa. This gives Great Britain, previously doomed to passive defensive action, suitable targets for attack. The problem of the significance of Italy's entry into the war is so interesting that it makes sense to consider it in more detail. For the Reich,

this decision by B. Mussolini meant moral support, however, much belated. The Italian fleet, the fourth in the world,

was of great positive importance. After the withdrawal of France from the war and the neutralization of the French naval forces, the Axis got every chance to seize dominance in the Mediterranean, create direct threats to Gibraltar, Malta, Egypt and indirectly to the British mother country. Opportunities to put pressure on Turkey have expanded.

On the other hand, the army of fascist Italy turned out to be completely unprepared for a modern war. The country lacked military equipment. Italian tanks and planes

75

inferior in their characteristics even to Polish developments. Air defense systems were practically non-existent. Command and control did not even meet the requirements of the First

World War. There was no oil in the country, and since Italy immediately fell under the British blockade, the only sources of hydrocarbons for it were Ploiesti and Baku, and the delivery of oil from these fields was fraught with significant difficulties. Finally, Italy had a sizable and

extremely vulnerable African colonial empire. This expanded the space controlled by the Axis, but also created many weak points in the geopolitical position of the fascist bloc.

For Britain, Italy's entry into the war meant the emergence of a new adversary at a critical moment in the country's greatest weakness. The situation in the Mediterranean Sea has become much more complicated. Perhaps it was the threat from the Italian fleet that forced W. Churchill to launch Operation Catapult, which was politically suicidal. However,

now the UK has a "game" against the unstable and stretched Italian geopolitical position in Libya and Ethiopia. A strategy of blockade of the Apennine Peninsula emerges, especially since Italy does not provide itself with strategic materials, and most of the supply is carried out by coastal shipping by sea. This opportunity diverts the Royal Navy, aviation and the most combat-ready army units to the Mediterranean theater of operations, weakening the defense of England. Thus, the strategic environment is sharply complicated: both sides get new

and unexpected opportunities at the cost of a number of difficulties. Apparently, the assessment of the fact of Italy's entry into the war depends, first of all, on how the regime of B. Mussolini will be able to dispose of its fleet. If Italy seizes dominance in the Mediterranean, the strategic weaknesses that have arisen in the Axis cannot be exploited by Great Britain, on the contrary, it will have difficulty holding Egypt and the Suez Canal. If, as happened in the Current Reality, the British capture the sea, then the Reich

76

receives nothing but a "headache" from a new ally.

During the autumn of 1940-spring of 1941, the war developed according to the plans of the British. In the spring of 1941, the Reich finally replaces Italy in the Mediterranean. From now on, Italy becomes Germany's junior partner and loses all strategic independence. The Wehrmacht wins a major and completely unnecessary victory in Yugoslavia and Greece, having received as a "trophy" a hostile territory, devoid of any economic significance and weakly connected with the rest of the "European fortress". The problem of "pulling out" the divisions stuck there from the Balkans turned out to be so difficult that it became one of the reasons for the delay in the Russian campaign.

The "removal" of Italy from the strategic horizon did not mean at all that the Axis military efforts would henceforth be subject to a single logic. In fact, for Germany, the strategy "forked": since the spring of 1941, one can speak of two completely separate wars. One will be led by the High Command of the Ground Forces (OKH) - in Russia. The leadership of another war will be concentrated in the hands of the High Command of the Armed Forces (OKW), and this war will mainly take place in the Mediterranean and in Africa.

The problem was that both the OKH and the OKW saw themselves as the heirs of a large German General Staff and the highest authority. The OKW enjoyed the confidence of Hitler (in fact, this structure should be considered as the personal headquarters of the dictator), but the OKH had real infantry and tank divisions at its disposal, which the OKW did not have and which the OKW could receive only after lengthy negotiations and several direct orders from the Fuhrer. For completeness, let us clarify that

"everything that flies" belonged to the Reichsmarschall of Aviation G. Goering and was controlled by the High Command of the Luftwaffe (OKL), and "everything that floats" - respectively, Grand Admiral Raeder and the High Command of the Naval Forces (OKM). The OKM clashed with the OKL to the same extent that the OKH competed with the OKW. As problems at sea grow, the command of the submarine forces (Dennitz) will receive a certain independence.

77

after which another internal intrigue will unfold in the Reich: submarine forces against sea forces .

In the spring of 1941, the Reich's Mediterranean strategy (OKW strategy) came to a standstill, and an attempt to launch a cruising war (OKM strategy) turned into death in the very first combat campaign of the newest battleship Bismarck² . Circumstances favored the "war of the OKH", the first step of which was to be the rapid defeat of Russia during Operation Barbarossa.

¹ At the same time, in the Reich there was still a relative order in the subordination and subordination of command instances. In Japan, for example, the Army waged war in China, and the Navy in Southeast Asia, and the order of their interaction was determined by a special written agreement signed by the parties in the presence of the emperor. Since there was neither the strength, nor the time, nor the opportunity to prepare the next Agreement on every minor issue, the fleet brought in ground forces and built tanks for its needs. The army, in turn, ordered several aircraft carriers for its own needs. Of course, things were not so simple. The Bismarck, escorted by the heavy cruiser Prinz Eugen, broke through the Danish Strait into the Atlantic. His path was blocked by a British squadron consisting of the battlecruiser Hood and the battleship Prince of Wales.

² The Bismarck sank the Hood, which suffered an internal explosion, damaged the Prince... and forced it out of combat. The battleship itself, however, also received damage, accompanied by a fuel leak. The British gathered superior forces for the Hunt for Bismarck, including the aircraft carrier Victories. Carrier-based aircraft attacked the Bismarck, causing minor damage to it. A new group of British ships, including the aircraft carrier Ark Royal, entered the "case". In the course of two consecutive raids, the Ark Royal aircraft achieved only one hit on the Bismarck, but an unusually successful one. The torpedo destroyed the battleship's rudders, and the Bismarck lost control. Under these conditions, the reserve connection of the British fleet - the H group from Gibraltar intercepted the unguided ship, and the 406-mm shells of the battleship Rodney sent the Bismarck to the bottom. (Under normal conditions, the Bismarck, developing 30-31 knots, would easily get away from the Rodney, which had 23 knots according to the project, but in May 1941 it was difficult to maintain 21 knots. But since the damaged battleship could only describe circles, it turned out to be easy prey for the "Rodney", which has heavier artillery and better armor.) Formally, it was about the "exchange". But, of course, the newest Bismarck was of much greater value to the Reich than the Hood was to the Royal Navy. 78

-2-

Here it is necessary to interrupt the description of the operations of the Current Reality and touch upon the recently created myth about the aggressive designs of the Soviet Union and the defensive nature of the war on the part of Germany. I. Bunich, V. Suvorov and a number of other authors (of which M. Meltyukhov stands out in a positive sense) have published more than one thousand pages on this subject.

This myth is very difficult to disprove, since it is not proven anywhere and in no way. Imagine that you are told: "KAMAZ is actually such a combat helicopter, built in secret KGB laboratories and designed to fight the Afghan Mujahideen and Chechen

separatists." You answer that you have never seen KAMAZ take to the air. They object to you: no one should see this - this ability of KAMAZ is top secret. You say that the KAMAZ drivers laughed at you when you asked about the flight and combat data of this car. You are told that the drivers are secret agents of the Russian special services and carefully hide their participation in operations against Afghanistan and Chechnya. And so on...

Of course, you can mathematically prove that KAMAZ is not capable of taking to the air on its own engines, but this proof means something only to someone who understands aerodynamics himself, and he does not need to prove that trucks do not fly ...

The situation is similar with the Bunich-Suvorov model. Are there any documents showing that the Soviet Union was preparing an offensive war against Germany? So these documents are classified. The only paper that even mentions the possibility of a preventive war in the West is Vasilevsky's note dated May 1941, while the Germans began to develop the Barbarossa almost a year earlier? It doesn't matter that the Nazi strategists simply "played cards", but the Soviet military really intended to attack them. But she didn't have time, because she was preparing for M-Day, July 6, and the Germans, realizing the danger at the last moment, gathered their strength and attacked earlier, on June 22.

79

But why July 6th? By any logic, the war should have started as early as possible - in May, at the end of April: European roads are already quite passable for cars, the length of daylight is sufficient and there are six months of ideal weather conditions ahead for an offensive war. There is also a magnificent pretext for war - Hitler's aggression in Yugoslavia. The Germans,

as we remember, planned to start the offensive in mid-May, but they were delayed by the Balkans. And what delayed Stalin? Reading Vasilevsky's note, which occupies three pages?

In reality, the problem of "who attacked whom" does not exist. In April 1940, the Reich armed forces attacked Denmark and Norway. This was rightly qualified as a crime against peace, although the British did not even try to hide the fact that they had their own plan for the occupation of Norway, and even scheduled by date. Because a plan is one thing, but a political decision to start a war is a completely different thing.

But even from a purely technical point of view, the Soviet Union could not suddenly attack Germany, even if the corresponding political decision had been made by I. Stalin. As in the First World War, the pace of deployment of Soviet troops in the western border military districts lagged behind the rate of concentration of German units on the eastern border of the Reich. This lag is caused, firstly, by the peculiarities of the outline of the transport network in the border regions, and, secondly, by the geographical extent of the Soviet Union. Simply put, during the period of concentration of troops, each Soviet division had to be transported to a greater distance than the German one, and the Soviet command had fewer roads at its disposal, and their quality was worse.

Of course, one can try to concentrate troops before the declaration of war and strike at the unmobilized, expecting nothing Reich. But German intelligence felt free enough in the border areas, and German reconnaissance aircraft made constant flights over Soviet territory. Under such conditions, it is impossible to hide the concentration of a million army, and the Germans, having received information that the Russians are building up

my group 80

fast in the west, they would react adequately, that is, they would simply speed up their deployment. And again, the decisive factors are the design of the railways and the "shoulder" of the transfer. In general, with any variant of concentration, the Germans have time two weeks earlier. This difference in deployment rates is a constant value.

Note, by the way, that there are exactly two weeks between June 22 and July 6. If there were no Balkans, and the Germans would have survived the "deadline" of the attack on the USSR - May 16, Bunich and Suvorov would have written about June 1. By the way, it is much easier to justify this date than the infamous "Day M". The first day of summer and, again, Sunday... -3- However, Bunich-Suvorov's Alternative Reality exists, and one has to

reckon with it. Let us also briefly study the arguments of the authors in favor of the fact that Stalin was really going to attack Germany, Romania and all of Western Europe. It has already been noted that the authors do not provide formal proofs. Among the archival documents, there is no plan for an attack on Germany with Stalin's

visa, and there are no corresponding orders for the deployment of troops. Plans for an offensive war in Western Europe were not worked out during war games. There was no diplomatic preparation for a major aggressive war. The only real document containing some outlines of an offensive plan, the "Vasilevsky note," only means that the General Staff, as it should be, worked out, among many others, this option too¹. Again, the reality was more complicated. The option (and even options) of an offensive war with Germany undoubtedly existed. The history of this planning dates back to the 1910s, when the Russian General Staff, taking into account the growth of the country's armed forces, their recovery after the failures of the Russo-Japanese war and the turmoil of the first Russian revolution, and also realizing the increased economic

importance of the Privilinsky region, proceeded to draw up active war plans with Germany and Austria-Hungary. Since it was not clear on which front - 81

With circumstantial evidence, the situation is little better. Among the arguments of V. Suvorov, a lot of space is occupied, for example, by long discussions about "the innate aggression of the West or East - Germany will strike the

main blow, this plan existed in two versions: "A" and "D". The main plan was "A", which provided for a private operation

against East Prussia and the defeat of Austria-Hungary with converging blows from the north and south to Lvov - Przemyśl. Next was an attack on Krakow. In the 1930s, these schemes were revived. In 1940, after the defeat of France, it became necessary to reckon with the

concentration of the bulk of the German armed forces on the Eastern Front. Allies represented by Finland, Romania, Hungary, Italy could join the Germans. Under these conditions, the General Staff began to lean towards the defensive strategy outlined in the 1941 deployment plan. However, the strategic game played in the last days of December 1940 in the Kremlin demonstrated the complete bankruptcy of such a deployment: G. Zhukov, the commander of the "blue" deep tank strikes, cut through the defenses of the "reds", surrounding their troops in the Minsk region. As a result of the game, G. Zhukov headed the General Staff, but he no longer had time to create a new deployment scheme. As a result, by June 22, 1941, the General Staff did not have any clear war plan: the defensive

one was considered discredited and - with the occupation of G. Zhukov as Chief of the General Staff - canceled de facto. The offensive plan was not ready, and its creation was hampered by the fact that the Russian deployment was delayed compared to the German one, well known to the General Staff.

When the first transfer of German units to the East began in the spring of 1941, A. Vasilevsky realized the degree of danger hanging over the "cover armies" in the event of any

any serious German offensive. Realizing that it was impossible to withdraw these armies for political reasons, and it would not be possible to reinforce them in a timely manner with the second and third strategic echelon due to the permanent lag of the Soviet troops in concentration, A. Vasilevsky proposed an operation dooming the covering armies to death, but also creating certain Problems. The time it would take the Germans to destroy the first strategic echelon of the Red Army could be used to occupy large defense forces along the Western Dvina-Dnepr line. It is clear that the active use of the covering armies according to the "Vasilevsky plan" was

possible only after I. Stalin made a political decision to start the war. I. Stalin did not make such a decision, and the "Vasilevsky note" did not get a move (although, probably, G. Zhukov knew it, which explains some of the actions of the Soviet military leadership in the first days of the war). 82

sivnosti" of Soviet military equipment. Most of these arguments betray simple ignorance of the issue: this is how V. Suvorov stubbornly calls wheeled-tracked tanks "motorway" and claims that they were specially designed to capture Western Europe. In fact, the wheel-caterpillar drive was used for some time by all tank designers, regardless of nationality. This drive was a forced technical solution due to the low resource of the first tracks. It was assumed that the tanks would get to the battlefield on a wheel drive, and before the battle, "put on" the tracks. This archaic scheme disappeared as soon as the local industry mastered the production of steel tracks with a resource

comparable to the life of the engine. She also disappeared in the Red Army. The situation is similar with the "jackal planes", which were built by everyone in the 30s - from Belgium to Japan. And so on... However, dividing weapons into "defensive" and "offensive" is absurd in itself.

V. Suvorov is trying to prove that the offensive was the doctrine of the Soviet army of the late 1930s and early 1940s, but here he is breaking through an open door. No one has ever hidden this, it is recorded in the statutes, repeatedly spelled out in memoirs. Another question is that from an offensive military doctrine to a decision to wage an aggressive war - "distances of enormous size." And the Red Army of 1941 was not ready for such a war ...

V. Suvorov paints for readers a picture of a completely incongruous military machine - all-conquering in the offensive and almost powerless in defense. Nothing new under the sun: "The Quartermaster General supported the ideas of General Kuhl very persistently and pointed out in particular that there were enough forces to carry out the offensive. The example with the "motorway tank" highlights the logic of "Suvorov's arguments", or

¹ rather, the absence of such logic. According to the logic of V. Suvorov, "highway tanks" were supposed to move quickly along the good roads of Western Europe. But, firstly, if you really need motorway equipment, it is much easier to use an armored car. Secondly, V. Suvorov inflicts the main blow not on Germany, but on Romania, where there were no good roads in 1941 at all ...

83

but when retreating, they may refuse. Regarding this story, which happened to the German army in early September 1914, analyst M. Galaktionov sarcastically remarks: "This is some kind of anecdote. The army is exhausted to such an extent that it cannot retreat, but can only hold out by advancing. If such expressions were allowed in that most difficult situation, this can still be understood, but to bring them seriously now means to make people laugh.

-4- Let us now consider the political expediency and possible strategic logic of the Soviet offensive against Germany in the summer of 1941 in order to estimate the possible operational consequences of the Thunderstorm.

For the "democratic historians" of the 1990s, global aggressiveness

Stalin's Soviet Union is self-evident and does not require proof. Meanwhile, Stalin's entire policy easily fits into the concept of "a new collection of Russian lands." He establishes control over the Baltic, formerly belonging to the Russian Empire, divides Poland with Germany, again laying claim to the former possessions of Russia¹. Unsuccessfully trying to annex Finland, also part of Tsarist Russia. Even in Bessarabia, the accession of which to the USSR became a de facto incident for Hitler, Russia had certain historical rights. It is not necessary to argue with the fact that such "gathering" was an act of aggression.

But, we note, in all cases it was about the lands historically associated with Russia. The attack was preceded by active diplomatic preparations (in the Baltics, it even replaced military operations). Nothing like a "sudden, without declaration of war" attack, pursuing decisive goals such as "world revolution" and "establishment of the Stalinist regime in Western Europe." There has been some exchange of territories. Privislinsky Krai was left behind

1

Germany, but the USSR received western Galicia. 84

There are no grounds to consider I. Stalin as a supporter of the idea of "world revolution" (unlike, for example, L. Trotsky and, to some extent, V. Lenin). All his life, I. Stalin fought the revolution, with the leaders of the revolution, with the revolutionary methods of managing the economy and ... I. Stalin was never distinguished by the desire for adventures.

Comparing the foreign policy of I. Stalin and A. Hitler, we see that the latter is ready to take the ultimate risk in the vague hope of a favorable "disposition" (Rhine region, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Norway), while the former never risked anything. under what circumstances. All the political and military victories of J. Stalin in the 1930s and early 1940s were the victories of the strongest over the weakest: the USSR and Finland, the USSR and Latvia, the USSR and Romania. The Red Army even began military operations against Poland only when the Polish army had already collapsed, and there could be no question of any defense. During this period,

only once a "real" war could not be avoided - in Finland. I. Stalin is true to himself: the scale of the war is extremely limited, initially it is about using the troops of only one district. The resistance of the Finns breaks the original plans, the war grows, there is a threat of entry into it of the great powers. As a result, instead of the planned "Finnish Socialist Republic", I. Stalin limited himself to the Karelian Isthmus (let's imagine that in October 1939 A. Hitler makes peace with Poland, having received only the "Danzig Corridor"). V. Suvorov writes a lot and penetratingly how complex were the goals set for the Soviet army in Finland. "Not a single army

in the world could have performed better..." In fact, as we noted in the third chapter, there was nothing unique or even difficult in capturing Finland, this task was solved "in two moves". Yes, and from a purely formal point of view, the capture of Vyborg is hardly more difficult than mastering Narvik, which the Nazi army coped with without particularly straining. But even if military professionals considered the Finnish campaign of the Red Army to be admirable. I. Stalin hardly went into subtleties. He

85

I saw that the Red Army could win the war with the three millionth Finland only by a significant exertion of forces. It is unlikely that this result encouraged him enough to decide to suddenly attack the army, rightly recognized

the strongest in the

world. And one more question. And what, in fact, did "Comrade Stalin" gain from a big war, even if it was super-successful? A cohort of "Stalin's commanders" next to the leader?

-5-

Strategically, the outline of the border in 1941 almost did not change compared to 1914. As before, East Prussia deeply flanked the strategic position of the Russian troops in Poland. The experience of the First World War showed that advance beyond the Vistula with an unsecured right flank is impossible, therefore, when constructing an offensive campaign against the Soviet Union, it will be necessary to allocate forces for an auxiliary operation against Königsberg. The main blow in all "offensive" schemes is inflicted in

the south. V. Suvorov makes Ploiesti a strategic goal: at the same time, the center of gravity of the operational formation of Soviet troops shifts to the Dniester. In principle, the Soviet command showed in 1944 "how it is done." A powerful tank grouping is concentrated south of Tarnopol, on the western bank of the Dniester, and strikes in a southerly direction on Iasi - Byrlad - Galati. An auxiliary attack on Byrlad is being carried out from the Izmail region. Such an operation leads to the defeat of the Romanian army and, probably, to a political crisis in Romania. However, while the Red Army is engaged in the defeat of Romania (in 1944 it took 10 days, but in 1941 the mobility of the Red Army is much lower,

and, accordingly, the pace of operations will be lower), the Wehrmacht was given complete freedom of action in Poland and Galicia. As a result, the Wehrmacht - even in the strikingly unsuccessful Barbarossa grouping - has every chance of defeating the Soviet troops of the Western and right wing of the Southwestern Front and reaching the rear of the offensive

86

payushey to Galati - Ploiesti groupings. Nothing good can be seen in this variant, therefore the most "advanced" authors of the "Suvorov direction" shift the main blow to the Lublin direction (with an auxiliary attack on Königsberg-Gdansk), confining themselves to a demonstration on the Romanian front. This strategic construction looks quite viable, since it was creatively copied from the Russian strategic plan of 1914 (option "A"). Since the "Suvorov" attack on Ploiesti leads to a quick catastrophe with any reasonable actions of the parties, it makes sense to consider in the future only the "Lublin" version of the active strategy for the USSR.

In World War II strategic RPGs, I saw this is actually happening.

"Tell me, field marshal, what do you, the military leadership, need from the political leadership so that our strike on Russia is really irresistible? — Preemptive strike from Russia.

Best of all - at the front of Army Group South. "I think I can arrange this for you ..." (From

the "pre-war" meeting at the German headquarters). Unlike V. Suvorov, roleplayers know that if with

one hand they "pull the opponent towards themselves", forcing him to open, then the blow with the second hand turns out to be stunning. In any case, if there is a need to take a fight with a strong enemy, then it is better to do it on your own territory. Especially if the enemy is inactive.

V. Suvorov wrote figuratively and in detail about the colossal combat strength of the Soviet tank corps of the "1941 model". In reality, they made an impression only by the number of tanks - up to 1,024 in the state. This is despite the fact that the Germans, having real experience in tank warfare, halved the number of tanks in the division in 1941 due to insurmountable problems with the controllability of troops.

I can only think with horror what would have happened if the Soviet mechanized corps - bulky, uncontrollable, overloaded with tanks, suffering

from lack of

87

hoty, and especially from non-deployed supply services¹ - would indeed go over to the offensive and break out into Poland and Rumania. The rear organs would be stuck on Soviet territory. The established crossings would be continuously attacked from the air. The tanks would break away from the infantry (who simply did not exist in the corps on the required scale) and would be left without fuel, lubricants, and ammunition. The non-combat losses of armored vehicles would have exceeded possible and impossible standards: along all the roadsides of Galicia, vehicles abandoned by the crews would have stood. And the German 1st Panzer Group, in its natural offensive movement in the direction of Lutsk, goes into the deep rear of the mobile group of the Southwestern Front ... This would be the defeat of the Soviet troops - unprecedented in Russian

history². However, in the Current Reality it turned out a little better.

Plot two: the first days of the Eastern Front

If the strategic aspects were worked out insufficiently or completely badly in the deployment of the Barbarossa plan, then the operational factors were taken into account much better, and the tactical moments did not leave much to be desired. Barbarossa was a poor war plan, but an excellent first strike design. The Red Army could not resist this blow. The whole question was whether the Soviet troops and their commanders would be able to recover from the shock.

The Germans planned surprise and achieved it to the fullest. border
the battle was won by them in the very first hours of the war.

¹ In the Red Army, motor vehicles - including trucks - were not included in the regular peacetime structure. The troops received vehicles only with the beginning of mobilization, and no one could say how much it would be and when it would appear. See

² appendix, scheme 2.

88

As part of the deployment of Barbarossa, the Nazi command organized two completely separate operations for destruction - north and south of the Pripyat River. Both of these operations brought decisive success to the Germans, however, the fighting on the right and left flanks of the strategic front developed according to different scenarios. Simplifying somewhat, we can say that a grandiose oncoming tank battle took place in the zone of the Southwestern Front, which has neither prototypes nor analogues in military history. North of Pripyat, the Red Army was defeated quite easily; there was no battle here. There was a massacre. -1 - Deployment north of Pripyat contained some element of stealth. Although the

Germans were going to strike the main blow against the troops of the Western Front¹ concentrated west of Bialystok (3rd, 10th, 4th armies and 11th, 6th, 13th, 14th mechanized corps), their best tank they deployed formations against the North-Western Front. Here, two German field armies and two

tank groups. In the very first hours of the war, the 56th tank corps of E. Manstein found a gap between the adjacent flanks of the 8th and 11th armies and broke through to Kaunas. The tank group of G. Goth broke out to the Neman and crossed it on the move.

I have already said that the Wehrmacht achieved complete surprise - strategic, operational, tactical. As a result, the first hours of the war, the German troops operated in absolute emptiness. Those Soviet units and formations that they met on the way did not even have combat orders, not after the start of the war, the

¹ military districts were transformed into fronts: the Baltic Military District became the North-Western Front, the Western Military District - the Western Front. Kiev IN - South Western Front.

² The 12th and 3rd mechanized corps were located in the second echelon. Far in the depths, beyond the Western Dvina, are the 27th Army and the reserves of the front. 89

not to mention defensive positions, enemy intelligence, flank support, and air support . Only at 9:45, more than five hours

after the start of the "land phase" of the war, Colonel-General F. Kuznetsov decides to defeat the Kaunas enemy grouping with the forces of the 3rd and 12th mechanized corps. G. Gotu, advancing at the junction of the Northwestern and Western fronts, that is, in the direction most vulnerable to the grouping of Soviet troops in the Baltic states and Belarus, was given complete freedom of action. 1At 03.07, Admiral F. Oktyabrsky informs the General Staff of the approach from the sea of a large number of unknown aircraft.

IN EVIL. G. Zhukov gives permission to meet the aircraft with air defense fire. The fleet repels the attack, but the military districts are not informed about this, they are waiting for reports from them. At 3.30, the headquarters of the Western Military District reports on a German air raid on the cities of Belarus, at 3.33 the same message comes from Kyiv, at 3.40 from Vilnius. Only after that G. Zhukov woke I. Stalin, who ordered to immediately assemble the Politburo. At 4.30, the summoned persons appeared in the Kremlin, by this time the German troops had already crossed the state border along its entire length, the operation "Barbarossa" had overcome the first "critical point" and entered - already! - in the growth phase. I. Stalin orders V. Molotov to immediately contact the German embassy. Around 5 o'clock in the morning, the Politburo learns that Germany has declared war on the Soviet

Union. Only at 5.25 the commander of the Western Military District gives the order to "raise the troops and act in combat", at 6.10. a similar order was sent to the 8th and 11th armies of the Baltic Military District, which became the Northwestern Front.

At 7.15 a.m. the directive of People's Commissar of Defense S. Tymoshenko is sent to the districts. However, this directive hardly contributed to the co-organization of the efforts of the troops fighting on the border: "immediately attack all the forces available in the border districts on the enemy units that have broken through and destroy them." By this time, the connection between

Moscow and the districts was still active, but the connection between the districts and the armies was lost. By 8 o'clock in the morning, the breakdown of communications was of a general nature: the fronts did not know the situation in the armies, the armies lost an idea of the actions of their corps. In a day or two, the corps will "lose" divisions. By 13 o'clock in the afternoon, I. Stalin decided to urgently send the leadership of the General Staff to the districts, recognizing, in essence, the complete collapse of the strategic management mechanism in the Red Army.

90

The directive reached the troops only in the evening. During the day, the local commanders tried to improvise something, as a result of which the 12th mechanized corps was dispersed over an area of 50x90 km, and its divisions divided the rifle corps among themselves. The 11th army was falling apart under the blows of the German troops, the 8th lost contact with it. A gap was growing between the adjacent flanks of the Northwestern and Western fronts. The situation

on the Western Front was rapidly deteriorating, where the counterattacking (it is not clear who, it is not clear in what direction) 22nd and 30th Panzer Divisions came under massive German air strikes and suffered huge losses. Assessing the threat posed to the rear of the front by enemy troops that escaped beyond the Neman, D. Pavlov orders the 21st Rifle Corps to restore

position. But the divisions of the corps are dispersed, and are located more than a hundred kilometers from the concentration area indicated by the commander.

While catastrophe loomed on the northern flank of the Western Front, the front headquarters assessed the situation in the south as satisfactory. It was assumed that the 4th Army (with which there had been no communication since the morning) was fighting on the line of Brest. In fact, G. Guderian's 2nd Panzer Group, flowing around the fighting Brest, rushed to the east, outlining a deep bypass of the southern flank of the Soviet troops in Belarus.

By evening, the General Staff (left without its chief, since G. Zhukov left for the Southwestern Front) considered that he understood the situation enough to order the Western and Northwestern Fronts to defeat the enemy's Suwalki grouping, that is, the 3rd Panzer Group, and by the end of June 24, capture the city of Suwalki.

F. Kuznetsov initially ignored the order, continuing to try to concentrate something real against the 4th tan. By 10 o'clock in the morning, German

¹ aviation had gained air supremacy. Sudden strikes on the airfields of the Baltic, Western and Kyiv military districts destroyed 728 aircraft on the ground (including 528 in the Western Military District). In total, for the first day of the war, the losses of Soviet aviation amounted to 1,200 aircraft. 91



June 22, 1941

kovo Göppner group. However, by the end of the day, G. Goth approached Vilnius and it was already difficult to pretend that there was no threat to the left flank of the front. F. Kuznetsov tries to turn the 3rd and 12th corps against Goth and gives the order "to prevent the enemy from leaving the Neman."

The 3rd Panzer Group, however, is not going to leave the Neman. On the contrary, G. Goth continues to move to the east, gradually leaning towards the south. By the morning of June 24, the gap between the adjacent flanks of F. Kuznetsov and D. Pavlov is 120 km, and significant German forces are advancing in this gap.

On the southern flank of the Western Front, Guderian occupies Baranovichi.

The 12th Mechanized Corps of the North-Western Front was drawn into

frontal battles with enemy infantry for Siauliai. The 3rd corps is pulled apart between the Kaunas and Neman German groups (4th and 3rd tank groups). As a result, receiving conflicting orders, the corps stands still, where no one touches it. And the 6th and 11th mechanized corps of the Western Front launched a decisive attack with an incomprehensible goal. For some reason, they launched an offensive against Grodno, as if deliberately choosing the most senseless operational direction. Under the blows of aviation, the corps simply melted away. On this, the active actions of the Soviet troops in the border battle north of Pripyat ended. The 8th army retreats to Riga, the 11th - to Sventsy. After 4 days and 5 hours from the beginning of the operation, the 56th Corps of Manstein reaches the Western Dvina in the Daugavpils (Dvinsk) region and captures the bridges. The third tank group is advancing along the Vilnius-Minsk highway without any problems.

As it moves south, it leaves the strip of the North-Western Front, finding itself in the deep rear of the Western, while both commanders simply lose sight of G. Goth. On June 27, the 3rd tank group from the north, and the 2nd tank group from the south, approached the Minsk fortified area and cut the Minsk-Smolensk highway. The next day, Hoth's tanks broke into burning Minsk, where they joined up with Guderian's divisions.

The Minsk battle ended with the encirclement of the 3rd, 10th, part of the 13th Army, the defeat of the 4th Army¹ and the mechanized corps of the Western Front; 328,898 people were captured, the enemy captured 3,332 tanks and 1,809 guns.

These, of course, are German data, but the Soviet side does not refute them, believing that "there is some grain of truth in this"². From the

¹ political report of the 4th Army of the Western Front dated July 4: "6th Rifle Division. There are 910 people, understaffing 12,781 people. 55th Rifle Division. There are 2,623 people, an understaffing of 11,068 people ... There are 1,090 people in the tank division of Colonel Bogdanov, of which 300 tankers, 90 trucks, 3 tractors and 2 T-26 tanks, of which one is faulty.

² From a telephone conversation between G. Zhukov and D. Pavlov on June 27, 1941.

93

-2-

The fighting in the zone of the South-Western Front was of a different nature. From the very beginning, von Rundstedt's offensive failed. The infantry corps were unable to break through the defenses of the Soviet border troops on the move, and after the advance units of the 6th and 26th armies approached, fierce battles began for Rava-Russkaya and Przemyśl. For the time being, everything was going well in the direction of the main attack: by 10 o'clock in the morning, the firing points of the 4th fortified area were blocked, von Kleist's tanks went through the fortified area and entered the operational space, developing an offensive on Vladimir-Volynsky, Lutsk, Razdekhov¹. However, in the middle of the day, units of the 14th Panzer Division, which bypassed Vladimir-Volynsky from the south, first stumbled upon the "traces" of the 22nd Mechanized Corps²,
then, on a full-blooded ar, the

¹ Army Group "South" also tried to use a military trick and divert the attention of the Soviet command by concentrating a strong, but inactive, 11th Army in the south. The idea turned out to be too subtle: preoccupied with real problems in the Lutsk direction, the leadership of the Southwestern Front simply ignored the potential threat from the south. But quite unexpectedly for the Germans, the 5th Army tried to fend off a non-existent threat from the north: as we will see below, air reconnaissance saw the movement of large masses of manpower and equipment from Brest-Litovsk to Kovel. "From the composition of the 22nd

² mechanized corps, only the 41st tank division, stationed on the western outskirts of Vladimir-Volynsky, was near the border by the beginning of the war. True, it was the most combat-ready part of the corps - it had 373 tanks, including 301 BT-7 and 31 heavy KV-2. However, the 22nd mechanized corps turned out to be a surprisingly unlucky formation - various troubles constantly pursued it. Having received a message about the start of hostilities, the commander of the 41st Panzer Division, Colonel P.P. Pavlov, opened the package he had with an extract from the army plan to cover the border and in strict accordance with the instructions from this package

sent the division ... in the opposite direction from the enemy - to Kovel, where, according to the cover plan, all the forces of the corps were to join. But that was not all. On the way, the BT wheeled-tracked tanks fell into a swamp and got safely stuck in it, and the divisional commander lost contact with the army headquarters. As a result, the division was completely excluded from active operations for the whole day. Having no connection with the division since the very morning, the commander of the 5th Army, Lieutenant General Potapov, generally considered that she had died.⁹⁴

Tillierian anti-tank brigade K. Moskalenko, who managed to turn around and build some kind of, but defense. The effect of a direct attack by tanks moving in marching order on the position of an anti-tank brigade was amazing: the Germans left 70 burning vehicles on the battlefield, lost the pace of the offensive and were forced to fight for Vladimir Volynsky until the end of the day. The breakthrough to Lutsk was liquidated at the very beginning.

There was no anti-tank brigade on the southern flank of the advancing grouping, but the offensive stopped there too, faced with a counterattack by the 15th mechanized corps. In the center - in the direction of Berestechko - there was not much resistance from the Soviet troops, but there the 11th Panzer Division had to overcome the swampy and roadless area of the Stry River, which limited the possibility of achieving decisive success in this direction.

On the whole, the Southwestern Front withstood the enemy's first blow² and preserved the integrity of the defense. Of course, at the junction of the defenses of the 6th and 5th armies and on the left flank of the 5th army, Kleist's tanks deeply wedged into the Soviet defenses, but the SWF command had every chance to close

The headquarters of the 22nd mechanized corps at that moment was located southeast of Vladimir-Volynsky, having with them an insignificant guard - several armored cars and two tanks. The corps commander, Major General S. M. Kondrusev, tried in vain to contact the 41st Panzer Division by radio, or at least to find traces of it on the ground. But instead, the headquarters column almost ran into the vanguard of the 14th German Panzer Division, which bypassed Vladimir Volynsky from the south. (V. Goncharov). "Mechanized corps of the Red Army in battle". In book. N. Poppel "In a difficult time." M, 2001). 1The figure of K. Moskalenko, which, of

course, should be divided by about two. But the fact that the 14th Panzer Division stopped shows that the Germans did suffer heavy and unforeseen losses. 180 aircraft were lost at the airfields. This is a huge figure, but not comparable

² with the losses of the Western Front. In any case, the aviation of the South-Western Front retained its combat capability and could somehow support the troops and, in any case, cover them.

95

breakthrough: on the first day of the war, the elite mechanized corps of the front did not participate in the battles and retained their

strength. In order to understand what follows, it is necessary to take into account a number of strategic factors.

First, I. Stalin proceeded from the fact that Germany could only wage a spatially limited war with the Soviet Union. This means that A. Hitler cannot set decisive tasks for the troops, such as the capture of Moscow and the occupation of the entire territory of the country (or at least its entire European part). It was assumed that the most realistic plan for Germany would be the rejection of Soviet Ukraine (according to the experience of 1918) and the seizure of the Black Sea coast. Within the framework of such ideas (quite shared by the General Staff), it was precisely the plains of Ukraine, convenient for the actions of arbitrarily large masses of tanks and infantry, that should have become the main theater of military operations.

Based on this assumption, the Red Army deployed its strongest grouping south of Pripyat, consisting of four armies of the South-Western and one army of the Southern Front. The most combat-ready mechanized corps were also concentrated here.

Secondly, the reports received by the Headquarters from the headquarters of the Southwestern Front sounded reassuring. Indeed, against the background of a complete loss of control in

Western Military District and the collapse of the defense of the 11th Army in the North-West, the situation south of Pripjat looked quite favorable. It must be added to this that Soviet intelligence was unable to reveal the composition of the Nazi grouping concentrated against the 5th Army. It was supposed to be

about "something about five divisions."

Thirdly, von Rundstedt took the risk of concentrating the 1st Panzer Group in a narrow, roadless and inconvenient corner of the border, the so-called Sokal salient. Since the offensive on the flanks - near Radzekhov and Vladimir Volynsky - was delayed, the advance of E. von Kleist's units on Berestechko only led to the extension of the "operational bag" in which the German tank troops were located in the latitudinal direction.

Under these conditions, the General Staff orders the front headquarters to switch to active actions: "firmly holding the state

96

border with Hungary, concentric strikes in the general direction on Lublin by the forces of the 5th and 6th armies, at least five mechanized corps, and the entire aviation of the front, encircle and destroy the enemy grouping advancing on the Vladimir-Volynsky, Krystynopol front, and by the end 24.6 capture the area of Lublin ... "

That is, the General Staff proposes to arrange real Cannes for the 1st Panzer Group and immediately seize the initiative, at least south of Pripjat. And "in principle" this plan corresponded to the situation. Unfortunately, it was necessary to fight not

"in principle", but in the specific situation of June 1941. It immediately became clear that the mechanized

corps were "in the wrong place." They had to be assembled, deployed, and created a supply system for at least fuel and ammunition. And this is in conditions when the command does not know how to control troops by radio (and if it were skillful, then the range of the radio stations in service with the corps did not allow the radio to be seriously used for control needs), wired communications were continuously torn, and communications with the help of A Germans messengers led to an unrecoverable delay in management. . weren't going to stand still. In the experienced and skillful von Rundstedt had so far put into action only a part of addition, his forces and had every opportunity

to increase the power of his offensive. All this was clear to the command of the Southwestern Front, whose chief of staff M. Purkaev was categorically against the offensive: "... tomorrow,

in this direction, at best, we will be able to rally less than seven of ours against a dozen enemy divisions. What kind of immediate offensive can we talk about? (...) It should also be borne in mind that we, in essence, have neither army nor front-line rear services yet - they have not yet been mobilized and deployed.

It turns out that our main forces cannot approach the battlefield at the same time. Corps will apparently get involved in the battle in parts (...) there will be an oncoming battle, and under the most unfavorable conditions for us. But corps commissar N. Vashugin, a member of the Military

Council of the front (front commissar) quickly explained "military

97

to the specialist" M. Purkaev about the "moral factor" and the significance of orders, and the headquarters of the South-Western Front began to carry out the directive of Moscow.

From the very beginning, there was no talk of an offensive against Lublin: the offensive was too deep for troops without army and front-line rears. M. Kirponos took up a simpler, and, from the point of view of the front command, more urgent

the task is to deploy six mechanized corps (4th, 8th, 15th, 22nd, 9th, 19th) against the flanks of the 1st tank group¹. The whole question was whether whether *in time* to concentrate these corps on their starting positions and then make them act more or less in concert. It is difficult to achieve such consistency even in a game of cards. In reality, it turned out something like this:

It immediately became clear that the northern grouping (9th, 19th, 22nd mechanized corps) was late in concentrating, which is not surprising, since the 22nd intercorps was drawn into the battle near Vladimir-Volynsky by one division, the second was carrying out a forced march to Kovel (according to the pre-war plan to cover the border²), while the third is still getting out of the swamp; The 9th and 19th mechanized corps are located in the Rovno region, more than a hundred kilometers to the east. The 4th mechanized corps was able to single out only three battalions against the southern flank of E. Kleist, since the rest of the forces of the corps were Commander Muzychenko (whom the headquarters of the Southwestern Front, apparently, did not inform about the counterattack plan

¹ Old Field Marshal A. von Schlieffen would have been dissatisfied: M. Kirponos replaced actions against the deep rear of Army Group South with an ordinary flank attack. In this sense, the Stavka directive was deeper and more interesting than the front-line order. But it was impossible, not only because of intractable problems with the supply of troops (although, in reality, mechanized corps could not break away from supply bases for more than a transition), but also for reasons of time and distance. The corps were too scattered, it took too much time to concentrate them on the outer flanks of the 5th and 6th armies and aim at Lublin. The 1st Panzer Group reached the rear of the Southwestern Front much faster.

² During June 22, this division will be "torn apart" to solve individual tasks. pobatalionno and almost porotno. As a unified fighting force, she no longer acted.

98

steps) diverted to the solution of private tasks of his army. The 8th mechanized corps has been in continuous motion for the second day. First, following the order of the command of the 26th Army, he concentrated southwest of Lvov. Then it is redeployed to the northeast, at the disposal of the 6th Army. Muzychenko, having found the corps, aims it at Yavorov - Przemyśl, that is, again directs it to the southwest. The next day, the corps turned to Brody - far northeast of Lvov, not to mention Przemyśl ... Thus, on the morning of June 23, only one corps of the 15th mechanized

could operate against the 1st Panzer Group. He fought throughout the day with the 11th Panzer Division of the Wehrmacht, and the 16th Panzer Division, which broke through to Berestechko, began to cover his flank by the end of the day. The next day, two corps participated in the battle - the 15th from the south and

the 22nd from the north. The 8th intercorps is still on the march, but the 4th was forgotten: it is located north of Lvov and is trying to close the German tactical breakthrough to Nemyriv.

The 22nd corps receives an order to advance in the direction of Vladimir-Volynsky and throws the two remaining divisions into the attack. The attack fails completely, but E. Kleist does not manage to knock down units of the 1st anti-tank brigade of K. Moskalenko from their positions. This formation cost the 1st Panzer Group more than a hundred tanks and three days.

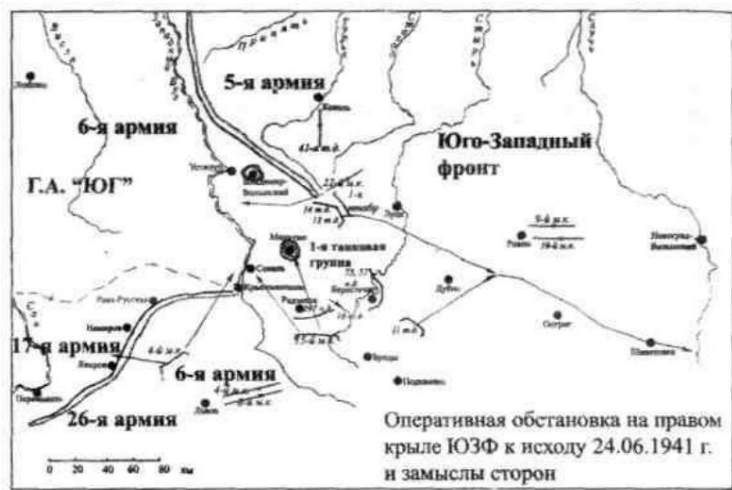
However, the situation on the left wing of the 5th Army continues to deteriorate. The 14th Panzer Division of the Wehrmacht groped for the open flank of the 22nd Mechanized Corps and, bypassing it and the positions of the 1st Anti-tank Brigade, escaped to Lutsk. Reserves

follow. The 22nd intercorps is unexpectedly transferred to the north, since air reconnaissance for some reason saw an enemy attack from Brest to Kovel "with the forces of at least five infantry divisions supported by two thousand tanks (!)", and he is eliminated from the game until the end of the battle.

Potapov, preoccupied with the imaginary danger on his right flank, nevertheless, is trying to close the real "hole" between Lutsk and Berestechko,

sending units of the 9th and 19th mechanized corps there. Although active tasks are assigned to these formations, in essence, there is no longer any talk of an offensive. Units operating against the northern flank of the group

99



June 24, 1941

E. Kleist was only able to detain the Germans at the turn of the Styr River and deprived them of the opportunity to develop success in the northern direction.

To the south of Lutsk, the situation worsened every hour. E. Kleist threw all the reserves into the resulting breakthrough. The 13th Panzer Division of the Wehrmacht deployed on a wide front from Dubno to Lutsk, throwing out reconnaissance in the direction of Rovno. The 11th Panzer Division turned south, advancing towards Ostrog. The 9th Panzer Division fought with the 15th Mechanized Corps near Radzkehov, and the 16th Panzer Division turned to Brody, going to the rear of the Soviet troops fighting in the Lvov salient. Parts of the 57th and 75th German infantry divisions, the 2nd echelon of the 48th mechanized corps of the Kleist group, approached Berestechko, replacing the tank units, which the German command sought to push forward as quickly as possible - through a narrow corridor exposed to attacks from both flanks. The pattern of the battle was determined: German tanks are trying to expand the breakthrough in the Lutsk region along the front and in depth, the Soviet mechanized corps alternately (as they approach) attack-, ut from the south, gradually shifting the axis of attack to the east, the German infantry divisions, using the fact that in the mechanized corps The Red Army does not have enough infantry to consolidate the occupied positions, about

100

the advancing Soviet groups are moving in from the rear, cutting them off from their supply bases. Continuous battles of five and a half thousand tanks in the Lutsk-Rivne-Brody triangle continue for more than a week.

The battle is replete with crises, manifestations of panic, now on one side, then on the other. Kleist issues an order: "Shoot for fleeing from Russian tanks." Such an illustrious unit as the 11th Panzer Division of the Wehrmacht, with experience in fighting in France and Yugoslavia, is running, leaving hundreds of motorcycles, many tanks and armored personnel carriers in good condition to reconnaissance of the 43rd, etc., 19th mechanized corps. Battalion commander V. Arkhipov says that he observed a similar moral and psychological state of the German troops only much later - after Stalingrad. Gradually, the city

of Dubno became the central point of the operation, through which the communications of at least two tank divisions passed. From the north, Dubno is occupied by units of the 19th Mechanized Corps, from the south a mobile group of the 8th Mechanized Corps¹ approaches. But commander Feklenko has no idea about the presence of commander Ryabyshev very close by and, feeling his isolation, immediately retreats to

Smooth. The Germans are hitting the Eighth Mechanized Corps in parts: its mobile group is surrounded in Dubno, while the main forces are operating in the Brody area.

On June 29, the Germans occupied Lviv, and the command of the Southwestern Front decided, this time supported by Moscow, to withdraw troops to the line of the "old fortified areas" (Ternopil, Proskurov, Chernivtsi). Lukin's impromptu group, as best they can, closes the breakthrough in the Ostrog area. The border battle south of Pripyat is over.

¹ While the essence and the matter, the 8th m.k. managed to attack the enemy from the Brody area in the direction to the north - to Berestechko. He was successful, but at night he was unexpectedly taken back - for Brody - Podkamen by order of the front headquarters. Two hours later, a new order came - turn the corps 90 degrees and throw it to the northeast - to Dubno. During these marches and countermarches, the corps suffered losses, its parts were mixed up. In the end, every time he participates in battle by echelon, and on June 27 the corps is finally divided into two battle groups. As a result, instead of three mechanized corps, 1-2 divisions act each time in the direction of the main attack.

101

-3-

One should not underestimate the scale of the defeat suffered by the Southwestern Front in the border battle. On June 23, the order to advance was received by six mechanized corps, numbering 167,533 people, 3,846 tanks, of which 271 KB and 537 T-34s. Two weeks later, on July 7, only 805 tanks were withdrawn to the line of fortified areas. Losses in personnel reached 25-30% of the payroll.

But the 1st tank group of E. von Kleist did not manage to enter the operational space. The operation of the Army Group "South" lost momentum, the geometry of its offensive was irreversibly disrupted. This was of great importance for the entire Soviet-German strategic front. Analyzing the battle in

Ukraine, one involuntarily asks the question: why was it lost after all? It must be borne in mind that the leadership of the operation by the German command authorities was far from ideal:

"... Rundstedt and Kleist were so carried away by their own plans that they simply "missed" the battle. They regarded it not as the culmination of a strategic deployment, but as an unfortunate hindrance to the rapid advance of their panzer divisions towards Zhitomir and Kyiv - a mistake unforgivable for adherents of the "German school" of military art.

The indifference of the local command to the greatest tank battle in all previous history was shared by the highest authorities. F. Halder, with Olympian calmness, records in his diary the "firm and energetic leadership" of the enemy, "heavy battles", the "extremely undesirable" threat of Dubno from the southeast. However, the headquarters of the OKH emphatically respects the prerogatives of the command of Army Group South and does not interfere in *the course* of events. The operational reserves of the ground forces remain intact, the command of the ground forces does not even raise the question of attracting additional aviation forces.

102

For his part, Runstedt also does not consider it necessary to make any adjustments to the pattern of operations. Meanwhile, although the 1st Panzer Group is not advancing in the most obvious of possible directions, its actions remain completely direct: the tanks are rushing to Lutsk, Dubno, Zhitomir and further to Kyiv. Such a transparent plan does not remain a secret for the command of the South-Western Front for long: with all the mistakes made by Kirponos and confusion with the Brest-Kovel direction, the mechanized corps of the Red Army are regularly concentrating against the German tank wedge. Moskalenko's 1st anti-tank brigade has a huge influence on the course of the German offensive: a double attempt at a frontal attack on its position costs Kleist time and

dozens of tanks.

Considering his main task the fastest advance to the east, Kleist seeks to push the divisions through the "bottleneck" at Dubno as soon as possible and move the supply base forward. This provokes a crisis: for some time there is a real threat of an attack by the 8th and 19th corps on the rear of the tank group. Trying to liquidate it and at the same time prevent the loss of time, Kleist does the same thing as Kirponos: he sends troops into battle by echelon. Strategically, the actions of the Army Group "South" rather quickly reduced to a direct offensive along the directorate Lutsk-Rivne-

Shepetovka-Zhytomyr-Kyiv. Such a pattern of the operation did not contain anything unexpected, within a few days the command of the Southwestern Front sorted out the situation and subsequently reacted to enemy actions tactically inflexible, but strategically quite adequate. Already in the first days of the war, a "tendency towards positioning" was revealed south of Pripjat.

From an operational point of view, both sides deserve only reproaches, and even more claims are made against the Germans, who had a pre-built attack grouping and did not have to solve issues of ensuring the interaction of troops right on the ground every minute. Another question is that the tank divisions of the Wehrmacht, which have the best

¹ Pereslegin B. L. "June 1941. Border battle on the South-Western Front. IN book. N. Popel "In a difficult time." M., 2001.

103

training and accumulated combat experience, tactically surpassed the armored formations of the Red Army. The battle

(in fact, both battles - north and south of Pripjat) revealed the complete bankruptcy of the Soviet military and German strategic intelligence. The air supremacy seized by the Luftwaffe was not so absolute and comprehensive as to make the work of aerial reconnaissance impossible. At the same time, the Soviet command not only regularly "lost" German tank corps, but also regularly "discovered" large masses of infantry and tanks where they were not and were not expected. Generally speaking, military reconnaissance turned out to be unable to reveal the enemy's attacking groupings, establish the location of his units, the nature and depth of the defense, and the location of the rear. Accordingly, it could not inform neither the tactical command, nor the army headquarters, nor the leadership of the fronts about the situation. On the other hand, the tactical and technical characteristics of the Soviet T-34 and KB tanks, which had been put into serial production for more than a year and were in large numbers in field units, turned out to be a complete surprise for

the Germans. The Germans had no real idea about the number of Soviet tanks and aircraft in the border districts. They knew almost nothing about the reserves of the Red Army. (Note that in all cases the intelligence error was in the "dangerous direction", that is, it meant an underestimation of the enemy's combat capabilities.) The main and obvious problem of the Red Army was the completely inadequate organization of communications and control. Having created the "wonder of the world" - the largest tank corps in history, the command, apparently, did not ask at all how to lead the march and, above all, the battle of such an armada. The problems of logistics and repair, apparently, were not even raised,

since their insolubility is visible to the naked eye: "... the 8th mechanized corps had 858 tanks of eight (!) different types. Of this number, 171 tanks were equipped with V-2 and V-2K engines and needed diesel fuel. The rest of the tanks had carbureted engines and required gasoline (at least three grades). Armored vehicles of the corps were armed with five modifications

guns of calibers 37 mm, 45 mm, 76 mm. dowry

104

nye artillery regiments also included 122-mm howitzers, 152-mm guns and howitzers. In addition to the above, within the framework of the approved states, the corps should have included its own aviation!

Another, no less important problem was the overload of the Soviet mechanized corps with tanks, with a lack of infantry and artillery, and completely unsecured rear areas. It is of interest to compare the 8th mechanized corps of the "1941 model" and the 1st tank army of 1944. The corps was staffed with 1,031 tanks, 36,000 infantry, 172

guns, 186 mortars, about 5,000 vehicles and 1,679 motorcycles. In reality, according to various sources, there were from 858 to 932 tanks, 31,927 people, "a certain number" of vehicles received through mobilization (apparently, they did not have time to count them). Only company commanders had radio tanks, the range of tank radios was (in reality) a little more than 10 kilometers.

The tank army of the middle of 1944 consisted of 55,000-56,000 people, 500-900 tanks and self-propelled guns, 650-700 guns and mortars, over 7,600 vehicles. More than 800 radio stations were used in command and control (which was considered completely insufficient). The difference is understandable, even if you do not take into account the difference in the combat experience of fighters and commanders.

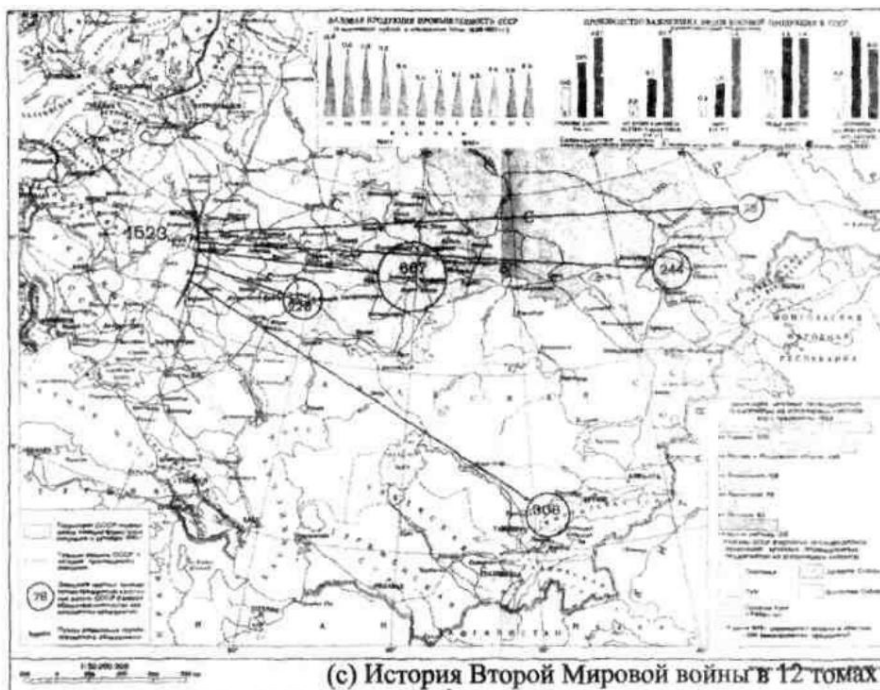
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So, by July 1, 1941, the Soviet troops north of Pripjat were defeated and destroyed. South of Pripjat, they suffered a heavy defeat and were forced to defend against fortified areas. The Germans brilliantly won the first stage of the campaign against Russia. A. Hitler even believed that this entire campaign was "won in fourteen days."

The time has come for the troops of the second strategic echelon to go on the offensive. On June 29, Finland entered the war. July 1 Army "Norway" opened hostilities Pereslegin B. L. "June 1941. Border battle

¹ on the South-Western Front. In book. N. Popel "In a difficult time." M., 2001.

105



Industry relocation

106

in the Arctic. The next day, the 11th German Army and its subordinates

Romanian troops crossed the state border in Moldova and began to move towards Odessa and Pervomaisk.

While the Nazi armies rushed to Daugavpils, destroyed Soviet troops near Minsk and Bialystok, repelled counterattacks of mechanized corps in Western Ukraine, advanced on Murmansk, Leningrad and Odessa, the Soviet General Staff, without much outward brilliance, carried out the most difficult strategic operation of the Second World War and secured an absolute advantage for itself. in the event of a long war.

We are talking about a grandiose act of relocating industry from the European part of Russia to the east. Already on June 29, a decision was made to remove 11 aircraft factories from the danger zone. Two days later, the evacuation of 10 enterprises of the People's Commissariat, ammunition, and the armored camp of the local metallurgical plant from Mariupol began. Soon 26 more enterprises were added to the list.

The transportation of industry to the east, which proceeded simultaneously with the mobilization and transportation of troops to the western regions of the country, was organized in an exemplary manner. Things got to the point that on July 20, the State Defense Committee was obliged to set the order for the evacuation of the factories' shops, so that during the entire relocation procedure, production would be maintained according to the plan. In total, 1,360 large enterprises, mainly military ones, were relocated during the three war

months . In order to assess the scale of the work, it should be taken into account that each enterprise had to be dismantled, the machines and other equipment had to be packed, loaded into trains, transported two to three thousand kilometers, unloaded, and reassembled. At the same time, despite enemy air strikes, destroyed rail tracks and base stations, absolute order must be observed in the trains, otherwise the plant will be lost: part of its equipment will go to Magnitogorsk, part to Kuibyshev, and something volumes. Volume 4. M., 1975.

1

107

completely stuck in Moscow or sent to the front - into the hands of the advancing German units.

The procedure was carried out almost perfectly, which testifies to the colossal preparations made in advance and allows us to understand what the General Staff was doing in those months when it became clear that defensive operations against Germany did not promise success, and the Red Army did not ready.

In essence, this grandiose transfer, which largely devalued the German successes on the battlefield, is a much more beautiful and significant strategic operation than the "Suvorov" offensive on Ploiesti. But, as always, "when he who fought well wins, he has neither the glory of the mind, nor the feats of courage."

Plot Three: Battle of Smolensk "It was not clear what operational goal we were pursuing, what was the meaning of all these battles."

E. von Manstein

"- You'd better ask Lukin, in whose hands Smolensk is!" *A. Hitler*

Defects in the Barbarossa deployment began to show even before border battle ended.

A properly structured operation usually "develops by itself", requiring almost no intellectual effort from responsible commanders. The success of the main

the strike ensures a further increase in events, and individual failures in auxiliary areas only contribute to the harmonious course of the operation. The matter boils down, basically, to the fight against the natural "Clausewitz friction": "The secret of military art is to carry on the offensive where it goes forward, not to slow down the rolling ball, but without interference let it move along the inclined plane.

108

bones" ¹ . It would seem that after such victories that the Wehrmacht won in Belarus and Ukraine, the "ball" would roll forward quite freely.

However, the plan did not really orient the performers even in the direction of the "movement of the ball". Practically within the framework of "Barbarossa", the troops were assigned one specific "two-pronged task": to defeat the Red Army in the western regions of the country and reach the Western Dvina-Dnieper line. By the end of June, the Wehrmacht - by and large - had done it. AND?..

-1 -

Manstein Corps received orders to stop. Von Leeb, the commander of Army Group North, had every reason for this: both flanks and the rear of the 56th Panzer Corps were open. In the north, the 41st since lagged behind by almost 160 kilometers, and the infantry of the 16th army was still crossing the Neman. In the south, the 3rd tank group of G. Goth blockaded Minsk. In the interval between Daugavpils and Molodechko, the 9th Army advanced, but its movement was enough

slow.

In the center, battles continued for Minsk and the Minsk fortified area. Finishing off the surrounded Russian troops turned out to be an unexpectedly difficult task, absorbing almost all the infantry divisions of the 4th Army and quickly linking the 3rd and 2nd tank groups. The adjacent flanks of the "Center"

and "South" groups were separated by the Pripyat swamps. South of Pripyat, the 1st Panzer Group, in close cooperation with the 6th Field Army, captured Rovno. Further, the front line turns sharply to the east - to Lvov and Drohobych. Farther south, the Hungarian corps and the German 11th Army with its subordinate Romanian troops (3rd and 4th armies) are still fighting on the border line. The German General Staff stated that complete tactical surprise had been achieved. Contrary to the fears of the planning authorities, the Soviet troops

did not try to withdraw

¹ "Rückblick und Betrachtungen zu Teil 1 - 3" von Archivrat George Soldan, "Das Marnedrama 1914" 2. Abschnitt des 3 Teiles. 109

inland: they fought fiercely for every line, at every opportunity turning into counterattacks. This for the Wehrmacht had both positive and negative sides. Since the initiative at the front was firmly held by Germany, and the "game" was still completely under her dictation, any division that was firmly defending or counterattacking could be considered a "winning figure" along with those already surrounded, dismembered and destroyed. And by the beginning of July 1941, the Nazis "won" the Soviet covering armies, by the middle of the month they will finally "take them off the board." But for this success, a disproportionate (from the point of view of the Germans) price had to be paid: only the army group "Center" lost 8,886 people by June 30: specific losses already exceeded the "norm" of the French campaign twice.

With all the achievements of the Germans in late June - early July, one can already speak of a crisis in operational maneuver. The center pulled ahead - to the Berezina, both flanks lagged behind, and neither the Design Bureau, nor the OKH, nor the commanders of the army groups took any measures to rectify the situation.

In the northwest, a situation has developed that is fraught with a "natural" halt in the offensive along the Western Dvina-Dnepr line. The blows of tank wedges cut through the defenses of the Soviet 11th Army, which, falling apart, rolled back to Nevel. To the north, the 8th Army more organized, following the order of the front commander, withdrew to Riga. A gap arose between the armies, which was covered by the forces of the 5th Airborne Division and the 21st Mechanized Corps. From the east, the 27th Army, untouched in the border battle, approached. These

measures would not have been enough to save the front, since Manstein's corps was already on the eastern bank of the Dvina. It seemed that no one and nothing prevented him from shooting down the 27th Army, which had not had time to turn around, to intercept the crossing at Krustpils and Riga with the reconnaissance battalions of the 3rd Mechanized Division, and to throw the main forces of the corps to the Island. Such an order was awaited at the headquarters of the corps, but von Leeb ordered that the 4th Panzer Group be first gathered together and the infantry units brought up. Only on July 2 did Manstein receive permission to advance on Rezekne-Ostrov-Pskov. The North group has decided on its plans for the next stage of the campaign.

110

If von Leeb oriented his operations to the northeast along the headmistress Tilsit-Leningrad, then the group "South" leaned to the south. The 1st Panzer Army broke through from Rovno to Berdichev, the 17th Army, following the retreating troops of the 26th and 12th Soviet armies, advanced from Lvov to Proskurov.

Von Bock found himself in the most difficult position. The operational "emptiness" in front of the front "pulled" his army group to the east - to Smolensk. The ongoing fighting in the Minsk "cauldron" tied Kluge's army. And holes gaped on both flanks, and in the south, in the Pripyat region, the Russian 5th Army was still maneuvering, not defeated, withstood a border battle and never retreated without an order.

-2-

By mid-July, the German command could use no more than sixty free divisions to continue the offensive. This was considered sufficient: according to the Chief of the General Staff, Halder, the USSR had only 46 divisions that had not yet been defeated at the front. "In reality, things were a little worse for the

Wehrmacht. The Red Army deployed an army group of the High Command reserve - 74 divisions in three echelons. Given the understaffing of the Soviet troops, we can assume that the Soviet side put up forces equivalent to 55-60 "estimated divisions." So, in fact, there were equal forces at the front. At the same time, the strategic balance remained in favor of the Germans so far: their reserve, in the form of forces released after solving tasks related to the destruction of encircled groups, arrived at the front faster than the Soviet command could mobilize new divisions. This means, in addition to everything else, that the Germans had to afford an operational pause. The Soviet troops from such a pause did not receive, in essence, anything, except for the opportunity to organize a slightly better stationary defense of D. M. Projector. Aggression and disaster. M., 1972. Pp. 282.

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111

(that is, if the offensive is successful, then the Soviet side lost more divisions encircled). The Wehrmacht, on the other hand, gained many advantages: tank and motorized rifle formations had time to rest, there was more time to plan the operation, it was possible to obtain more accurate intelligence information. (In mid-July, German intelligence detects the deployment of enemy reserve armies, after the start of the battles of the second phase of the campaign). During initial planning

the operational pause was deemed necessary, and a full 20 days were allotted for it. (More precisely, the date for the transition to the second stage was set no later than the fortieth day from the start of the campaign). But for some reason the German generals were in a hurry to win the war! Army Group Center reported that in order to continue the offensive, it needed a pause of only seven days (by the way, it did not receive

even this week)¹. The Germans, of course, are fighting for gaining momentum, but with rather strange methods. In reality, a regrouping was required along the entire front (in the north, the 16th and 18th armies had already begun to interfere with each other, in the south, the continuation of the offensive in the existing - and clarified by the command of the South-Western Front - grouping did not promise real success, in the center there was frankly not enough troops). Operations would be accelerated if, along with the regrouping, the OKH reserves were brought into line, and fresh divisions from Europe were transferred in their place. During the time it would take to carry out these measures, the infantry divisions fighting in the Baltic states, Belarus, Moldavia and Western Ukraine would be released, and the high command could decide on the goals and plans for the second "tact" of the campaign.

(Attention! As of mid-July, the Germans still do not know what they will do behind the Western Dvina-Dnieper line. In the text of the Barbarossa plan, as we have already indicated, this stage of the war is not considered; there is only an indication that "the decision must be made later". "Later" has come, but the commanding authorities continue to be silent.)

¹ See R. Ismailov "The Last Blitz". In book. "Lost Battles" M., St. Petersburg: ACT., Terra fantastica, 2001.

112

"Here, the leadership of the Wehrmacht for the second time made a mistake made when planning Operation Roth (the final phase of the French campaign) - it believed that the war had already been won, and further actions were combing the territory in order to destroy scattered enemy forces. Let us recall, however, that in France the Germans were faced with the fact that the enemy was able to organize a new line of defense, which they failed to break through "with a swoop". In any case, instead of a justified and planned pause, a

series of battles unfolded, the central of which, undoubtedly, is Smolensk. Started on July 10, it continued until September 10 and determined the course and outcome of the entire operation "Barbarossa". As part of the campaign, the battle of Smolensk should be regarded as a general battle, on the outcome of which the fate of the entire war depended. If the Germans won it quickly (by the beginning of August), they really again faced the "emptiness", so favorable for the offensive of tank formations. The loss meant stopping half of all Wehrmacht forces, which immediately led to a noticeable deterioration in the position of both flank groups and a large-scale crisis along the entire length of the front. In the Current Reality, the Germans won the operation, but slowly and with heavy losses. As a result, the Army Group Center lost the opportunity to conduct meaningful offensive operations - the next line of defense was already ready and occupied by the troops, which was not inferior to the previous one. This left a chance for both sides.

-3-

Having determined the direction of the enemy's main attack, the Soviet command is making desperate efforts to create a solid front, if not along the Berezina, then along the Dnieper. Five new armies were deployed in the Smolensk region and to the west - the 22nd, 19th, 16th, 20th, 21st, as well as wasps -

¹ R. Ismailov "The Last Blitz".

113

tanks of the 13th and 4th armies (there are 24 divisions in the first echelon, a few more formations came later). In the rear, behind the Desna, a *reserve group* was formed consisting of the 24th and 28th armies - a total of 19 divisions. In the first approximation, these forces were enough to "close the hole" on the Berezina, retreat with fighting to Smolensk, where to take up

a stable defense. The goals of the Wehrmacht are less clear. The 2nd and 3rd tank groups, consisting of 28 divisions, of which 9 tank and 6 motorized were going to attack on an eight-hundred-kilometer front in a general direction to the east, which obviously predetermined the focal nature of the battle. In Brauchitsch's well-known phrase: "The main thing is not the mastery of space, but the destruction of the Russian forces"—there is already a denial of operational maneuver. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the German troops did not so much start the battle as were drawn into it by the momentum of the movement to the east. The operation began on July 10 and developed in three isolated operational directions - Velikoluksky, Smolensky and Rogachevsky.

The Soviet leadership lost the first stage of the struggle and had no great illusions about the second. As long as the German tank groups remained on the move, there was nothing to oppose them. But the leadership of the General Staff already at the beginning of July was well aware of the fact that the Germans unexpectedly realized by the end of the month: all of Russia, even all of European Russia, tanks on caterpillars would not pass. Motor resources will end earlier.

This created chances, especially since the interaction between tank groups and field armies left much to be desired. In addition, the tank groups were of little use for the long-term holding of the territory, and it was precisely this task that they would have to solve in the event of an operational crisis near Smolensk. It must be said here that

modern military literature is skeptical about the strategic talent of Soviet commanders, especially when it comes to 1941 and 1942. Indeed, the leadership of the armies and fronts was put out of hand, and some glimpses of operational thought in the commander of the South-Western Department of the Cabinet of the IVI VAF, inv. No. 10/IVI, sheets 31-32.

1

114

front M. Kirponos (more precisely, his chief of staff M. Purkaev) does not change this assessment. However, already on June 22, as we noted above, not only an illiterate and disastrous order was issued for an immediate counterattack by mechanized corps, but a significant decision was made to relocate industry to the east. In the following days, the General Staff, acting in the most difficult situation of the complete collapse of communications and control, organizes a distinct "castling" of forces to the central sector of the front and outlines reserve "positions of resistance" along the Narva-Luga and Nelidovo-Bryansk lines. By mid-July, it became clear

that the German offensive had lost a single leading line and was moving in three divergent directions - to Leningrad, Moscow and Kyiv. This created the prerequisites for the strategic isolation of the German army groups, the fragmentation of their forces and, in the long term, for stopping the advance deep into Soviet territory. Let us note here that F. Halder also notes in his diary the "tendency towards positionality" that arose on the Eastern Front. Under these conditions, two geographical areas, which the Germans

considered "inconvenient" for conducting mobile operations, acquired fundamental importance. In the north is the Valdai Upland, stretching from Nevel and the Great

Bow to Valdai and further to the upper reaches of the Volga in the area of the Rybinsk reservoir. In the south - an area formed by the currents of two tributaries of the Dnieper - the Pripyat and the Desna: from Novograd-Volynsky, where the 5th Army is still holding out, to

Chernigov and Konotop. **-4-** The first stage of the Smolensk battle lasted from July 10 to 20 and was accompanied by new high-profile German successes. In the north, the 57th Panzer Corps pushed back the 22nd Army and took Velikiye Luki. However, like all direct strikes, this offensive had only limited success: the Soviet troops entrenched themselves east of the city with their front to the south. In practice, the 22nd Army formed what is called a "remote flank position" in the doctrine of the operation, and blocked any attempts by the 3rd Panzer Group to advance

115

heading north or east. By the end of August, the Germans will be able to cope with the 22nd Army, but this will no longer be of decisive importance.

In the center, things were going much better for the Germans. They easily overcame the resistance of the Soviet armies and entered the operational space: by July 16, the 3rd Panzer Group captured Yartsevo from the north, the 2nd started fighting for Smolensk, bypassing it from the south. An auxiliary strike near Mogilev led to the encirclement of part of the 13th Army, the remnants of which rolled back to the south.

Under these conditions, Guderian advanced to Yelnya, occupying an advantageous starting position for an attack on Moscow, and Goth focused his tank group on Rzhev in order, firstly, to sort out the difficult situation on his northern flank, and, if necessary, to surround and liquidate 22- yu and the 29th army that approached it, and, secondly, in order to reach the Valdai Hills from the south, posing a threat not only to Moscow and the forces concentrated around it, but also to the North-Western Front. This decision was fully in line with

the situation, but von Kluge, who at that moment was operationally subordinate to both tank groups, turned Goth to the south, offering to deal with the destruction of the encircled Smolensk group. Kluge can be understood, but exactly what the Soviet command hoped for happened: the German mobile formations lost their freedom of maneuver, the pace of the operation instantly dropped, and it became possible to fend off individual tactical threats, which were not so many.

The offensive of the Soviet troops immediately began - in the center (in the general direction of Smolensk) and on the flanks. On July 20, Army Group Center went on the defensive along the entire outer front of the encirclement.

The attack on Smolensk by the forces of the pulled up reserve armies had, in general, very limited success. Although it was possible to break through a narrow "corridor" to the encircled troops of the 16th and 20th armies, this "corridor" was narrow and could be shot through. In addition, the 28th Army, in turn, was surrounded.

Much more dangerous for the Germans were actions on the extreme flanks, where the 22nd Army attacked the 57th Corps in the general direction of Velikiye Luki and put it in an extremely difficult situation, and the cavalry corps Pete

116

Rovsky took Rogachev and Zhlobin and began to cover the southern flank of Army Group Center, which had long been "hanging in the air." The Germans liquidated these counterattacks, using the divisions released near Minsk and the reserves of the OKH. In practice, by the end of July, these reserves melted away, being introduced into the line in parts to solve tactical problems at various points in the battle of Smolensk. It was simply impossible to manage the reserve worse. To a certain extent, he was simply "taken off the board." Almost like Soviet cover armies.

So, the Germans achieved new major successes, advancing 170-220 kilometers. But now the mobile units of the Wehrmacht finally turned out to be bound by completely inadequate tasks for blocking the encircled troops. There was no one to advance to the east. The battle near Smolensk

lost all form. The Soviet armies tried to release the encircled grouping, this was not successful, but forced the enemy to spend more and more of his forces, and it was about the most valuable personnel of the elite divisions. Losses in tanks in the 2nd and 3rd tank armies¹ amounted to 60-70% of the payroll. There was an acute problem with motor resources. The 3rd Panzer Army alone urgently needed 300 new engines. At the disposal of the rear services of the OKH "for everything and about everything" were 400 motors. And they still needed to be delivered to the front line.

Field Marshal von Bock, commander of Army Group Center, will say on August 4 to Hitler, who arrived on the Eastern Front: "I consider the further offensive of Army Group Center to be dangerous, my Fuhrer, and I propose in the current situation to take strong positions in order to wait out the Russian winter" ². By the

beginning of August, the Barbarossa plan had already ceased to exist. The Nazi troops lost too much time near Smolensk, near Tallinn, at the turn of the river. The renaming had a deep

¹ meaning: the share of tanks in formations fell, the share of infantry increased.

² O. E. Moll. Der deutschen Generalfeldmarschalle 1935-45. Rastatt, 19b1, p. 19.

117

Luga, near Kyiv, where the 1st Panzer Group was stuck in the Russian defense, unable to turn tactical successes into operational ones. "The largest offensive of the Wehrmacht bogged down. (...) from the point of view of German military art, the campaign was unconditionally lost - since the original plan was refuted, and there was no time to create a new one .

... By mid-July, the Wehrmacht high command wakes up from deep suspended animation and realizes that the three army groups of the Eastern Front are waging three completely different battles with completely different goals, and the Barbarossa offensive itself has finally taken the form of an offensive in divergent directions. On June 13, even before the start of the Battle of Smolensk, Hitler came up with the idea to turn the formations of Hoth and Guderian to the north. This, however, meant the abandonment of all activity in the direction of Moscow, with which neither the leadership of the OKH nor the commander of Army Group Center von Bock could agree. On July 19, "Directive No.

35" was born, orienting von Bock's tank formations to the Valdai Upland (G. Goth, preparing an attack on Rzhev, acted in the spirit of this directive). However, on the 23rd, out of nowhere, an "addition" to this directive appears, completely changing its character and turning operations on the Eastern Front on its head. Now it is supposed to "somehow" unite Guderian (fighting near Smolensk and Yelnya) with Kleist (starting a direct attack on Kiev from a narrow bridgehead between Zhitomir and Berdichev) under the general leadership of the 4th Army and direct this grouping to Rostov and further to Caucasus "up to Baku". Goth's army was sent north, and Army Group Center (where, as you can easily see, the 9th and 2nd armies² remained without mobile troops) was ordered to take Moscow. R. Ismailov "The Last Blitz". The main reserve of the OKH, introduced into the battle line

during the Battle of

² Smolensk. The capabilities of the 2nd Army should not be overestimated: it was numerically weak, inactive and lagged behind the rest of the armies of the Eastern Front in terms of combat capability.

This directive was canceled without further ado, and on August 12 a new document was issued, aiming the troops of the Center group at Moscow, that is, registering the current state of affairs as "due". The order, however, remains on paper, since von Bock's available troops are drawn into the battle of Smolensk. Under these conditions, the Fuhrer of the German nation came up with a plan for one of the most ambitious operations of the Second World War.

The fourth plot: Uman and Kiev - the destruction of the South-Western

Front -1 - By the beginning of the Smolensk battle, the situation on the front of Army Group South is as

follows: the 6th Army takes a position with the front to the east - north - northeast from Sarn to Novograd -Volynsky and further to Zhytomyr. To the south, in the "bottleneck" between Zhytomyr and Berdichev, the 1st Panzer Group advances to the east. The 17th Army covered its right flank, deploying along the Proskurov-Chernivtsi line with the front to the southeast. The 11th Army, together with the Romanian troops subordinate to it, is slowly advancing towards the Dniester, and until July 12 it fails to force it. The 4th Romanian army is deployed along the Prut, it has not yet crossed the state border. The Soviet defense maintains its integrity, but the reserves are exhausted. The Headquarters cannot help her, since all her resources are absorbed by the decisive battle that has begun in the Smolensk region.

M. Kirponos has nothing to oppose the enemy, except for a tough defense and the constant activity of the 5th Army, stubbornly attacking the "bottleneck". For his part, von Rundstedt cannot offer any operational idea, except for the offensive of the Kleist mobile group, which should someday enter the operational space. As near Smolensk, near Kiev, the German troops are not driven into battle by an operational plan, even the most unsuccessful one, but by the simple inertia of moving to the east.

In the days that followed, the difficulties on both sides worsened. The 1st tank group breaks through to Kyiv on a narrow front and, from acceleration, gets bogged down in the prepared positional defense of the Kyiv fortified area. Kleist finds himself in a very difficult position, his entire army is concentrated in a long and narrow "bag", there is no freedom of maneuver at all, both flanks are under pressure from the enemy. But a direct threat to Kyiv ties the hands of the leadership of the Southwestern Front. There is no time to correctly build a counter-offensive against Kleist's troops, no free reserves.

By this time, Rundstedt finally realized that his plan to quickly take Kyiv and join between Gomel and Chernigov to the southern flank of Army Group Center had completely failed. In the conditions of a wooded and swampy closed area, indented by countless tributaries of the Pripyat, flowing in this area from south to north, the 6th Wehrmacht Army cannot realize its advantages in strength and mobility against the 5th Army of the Southwestern Front. It is impossible to take Kyiv with Kleist tanks, only infantry can do this. But the speed of its advance near Kiev does not exceed one kilometer per day.

On the other hand, these battles fetter the best forces of the Southwestern Front, which gives Runstedt hope to find a weak spot in the battle formation of the "Russians". And the 1st Panzer Group turns sharply to the south. This means that from now on, Army Group Center must solve its own problems: win the Battle of Smolensk and at the same time somehow cover up the Gomel "hole". But at the cost of abandoning a unified strategy for the entire military campaign

Rundstedt finally gets a chance to achieve real tactical successes on his own sector of the front.

To the south of Belaya Tserkov, the 1st Panzer Group enters the operational space and begins to move rapidly in the direction of Nikolaev. On August 2, the 17th Army rushes towards it, breaking through the front between Zhmerinka and Vinnitsa. On August 2, in the area of the city of Pervomaisk, German troops united. The so-called Uman cauldron arose, into which the 6th and 12th armies fell. According to German data, over 100 thousand soldiers, 217 tanks and 858 guns were captured. The defeat of the 6th and 12th armies was indeed half

120

nym, but the figures cited in German sources are doubtful. In any case, E. Dolmatovsky, a direct participant in the battles near Uman, in his literary and historical study "Green Gate" claims that by the beginning of August there were not so many people and equipment physically in both armies. Perhaps closer to the truth it will be considered that the Germans indicated the total losses of the 6th and 12th armies in the Uman operation.

-2-

The success of the Uman operation carried the main operational line of Army Group von Rundstedt even further south. Soviet troops retreated beyond the Dnieper, leaving behind, however, a large bridgehead in the Odessa region. The 4th Romanian Army blocked the bridgehead and launched an offensive against the city, but was not successful and entered Odessa only after the garrison was evacuated - on October 16, 1941.

Kyiv, by the beginning of the battles for Uman, was bypassed several hundred kilometers from the north and several dozen from the south. On July 29, immediately after the breakthrough of the 1st Panzer Group to Pervomaisk, G. Zhukov raised the question of the junction of the western and southwestern operational directions. It was clear to the Chief of the General Staff that the Red Army could not fight two battles simultaneously - for Smolensk and for Kyiv - in the conditions of a complete loss of initiative at the front. In fact, as we shall see, even the then victorious Nazi army could not afford this. "... the

weakest and most dangerous section of our fronts is the Central Front. The armies covering the directions to Unecha and Gomel are very few in number and technically weak. The Germans can take advantage of this weak point and strike at the flank and rear of the troops of the Southwestern Front. (...) The SWF must be completely withdrawn beyond the Dnieper. Concentrate reserves of at least five reinforced divisions behind the junction of the Central and Southwestern fronts. - And what about Kyiv? - I. V.

Stalin asked ... "The Kiev catastrophe has

been repeatedly reconstructed and described in detail

historians on both sides of the front line

121

that. But even now it is difficult to give an unambiguous assessment of the decisions taken "at the highest level" in July-August 1941. Knowing the end result, we have the right to assert that Stalin's stubbornness, who demanded to keep the capital of Ukraine at all costs, led to the most severe defeat in all of Russian history. The strategic and operational fallacy of the decision to "keep Kyiv" is obvious. But at the level of "grand strategy" there are options ...

"... - Kyiv will have to be abandoned. In the western direction, it is necessary to immediately organize a counterattack in order to eliminate the Yelnin ledge. The enemy can use this foothold to attack Moscow. - What other counterattacks are there, what kind of nonsense? - I. V. Stalin flared up. - How could you think of surrendering Kyiv to the enemy?

This was G. Zhukov's last report as Chief of the General Staff. He is sent to command the Reserve Front, to conduct

"promised" offensive near Yelnya. The battle of Smolensk continues. The new Southern Front, consisting of the 9th, 18th, remnants of the 12th and 6th armies, and the left wing of the Southwestern Front, withdraw beyond the Dnieper. Army Group "South" finally loses the thread of what is happening and finds itself under the influence of centrifugal forces: the 4th Romanian army advances on Odessa, the 11th - on Kherson, Kakhovka, Nikopol, the 1st tank group through Krivoy Rog is deployed like a fan to Kremenchug - Dnepropetrovsk — Zaporozhye. The 17th Army occupies positions along the Dnieper between Kanev and Cherkassy, the 6th Army besieges Kiev and puts pressure on the 5th Army of the South-Western Front, which covers the direction to the Desna and is in contact with the 21st Army of the Central Front. Simplifying somewhat, we can say that two Soviet fronts - the Southwestern and the Southern - are defending themselves in

the bend of the Dnieper. The Western and Central Fronts participate in the Battle of Smolensk. The Northwestern Front is fighting along the line of the Luga River, Lakes Ilmen and Seliger. The situation in the south is getting worse every day. The Germans manage to drive a wedge between the 37th Army defending Kyiv and the 5th Army operating on the

Desna. The bridgehead captured on August 23 near the village of Okuninovo did not have a fundamental

122

importance (the Germans were not going to attack with any large forces from this "bear corner" at the confluence of the Dnieper and the Desna), but the tactical threats to the adjacent flanks of the armies were quite serious.

-3-

The decisive events took place on August 20-24. These days, the Fuhrer made a decision that, in his opinion, allows to avoid the clearly emerging positional impasse on the Eastern Front, and brought it to the executors.

The essence of the operational idea was to turn to the south the entire right wing of Army Group Center, that is, the 2nd Field Army and the 2nd Panzer Group. The 2nd Army delivered an auxiliary strike from the Dnieper to the Desna east of Chernigov, having the task, together with the Reichenau troops operating from the Okunin bridgehead, to defeat the 5th Army. Guderian's task was much more difficult. His tank group (all of whose corps were involved in the battle) was supposed to break away from the enemy, turn around to the south and, having set up flank guards from those forces that are not a pity, begin a rapid advance in the general direction of Romny - into the deep rear of the troops of the South-Western front. Guderian, who was aiming at Moscow at that moment and having difficulty imagining how, being in contact with the enemy, to perform

such a complex and, generally speaking, forbidden technique by any manuals on driving troops, sharply protests and flies to the Fuhrer's Headquarters in order to personally explain to him the impossibility operations. The conversation between Hitler and Guderian took place behind closed doors. What and how it was said there, we can judge this only from the notes of Guderian, who is laconic on this issue, but the commander of the 2nd Panzer Group left the Fuhrer's office in a firm conviction of the possibility and necessity of the operation. This abrupt change in position, Halder, who also opposes the offensive to the south, did not forgive the general

never. On

August 19, a day before Hitler made a decision and five days before his conversation with Guderian, G. Zhukov, from the post of commander of the Reserve Front, warns Headquarters: "The enemy's possible plan is to defeat the Central

123

front and, having reached the region of Chernigov, Konotop, Priluki, defeat the armies of the South-Western Front with a blow from the

rear. Under these conditions, the Headquarters creates the Bryansk Front, headed by A. Eremenko,

setting before him the task of ensuring the junction of the western and southwestern operational directions. On August 24, the day Hitler urged Guderian to turn the tanks to the south, a conversation took place over a direct wire between I. Stalin and A. Eremenko: "Stalin

is at the apparatus. Hello! I have a few questions for you: 1. Shouldn't the

Central Front be disbanded, the 3rd Army should be combined with the 21st and the united 21st Army should be placed at your disposal? I am asking this because Moscow is not satisfied with Efremov's work. 2. You

demand a lot of reinforcements in men and weapons ... 3.

We can send you one of these days, tomorrow, or at least the day after tomorrow, two tank brigades with some KB in them and two or three tank battalions; do you really need them?

4. If you promise to defeat the scoundrel Guderian, then we can send several more aviation regiments and several PC batteries. Your Answer?

- Hello! I answer. 1. My

opinion on the disbandment of the Central Front is as follows: in connection with the fact that I want to defeat Guderian and, of course, I will defeat him, the direction from the south must be firmly secured. And this means firmly interacting with the strike group, which will "operate from the Bryansk region. Therefore, I ask the 21st Army, connected with the 3rd Army, to subordinate me ...

I am very grateful to you, Comrade Stalin, for fortifying me with tanks and planes. I ask only to expedite their dispatch. We really, really need them. As for this scoundrel Guderian, we will certainly try to fulfill the task you have set, that is, to defeat him .

¹ Twenty-four years later, A. Eremenko will write in his memoirs: "As can be seen from these negotiations, the Headquarters did not know about the situation on the fronts and undertook to disband the Central Front, which defended the sector to which the enemy shifted the direction of the main attack. We agreed with all the proposals of the Headquarters, although the control of the 21st Army was extremely difficult due to its great remoteness.

124

August 26 Guderian captures the bridge over the Desna north of Shostka. The Kyiv operation is entering a phase of growth.

-4- By the end of August, the flanks of the 6th and 2nd German armies closed. Now the entire strategically important region of Desna-Pripyat was in their hands. Commander 5, M. Potapov, bent the right flank, leaving the 15th Rifle Corps to defend Chernigov. The 6th Soviet Army, which had escaped defeat in the Battle of the Border and in the first phase of the Kyiv operation, found itself in a difficult situation.

Further - from Chernigov to Novgorod-Seversky - the front was opened. On August 28, the 40th Army began to form there: two rifle divisions, one of which had been in combat since June 22, and the other was formed on the spot from fresh unfired reinforcements, the remnants of the 10th Panzer Division (without tanks), practically destroyed in battle near Kiev, the 2nd airborne corps. From Novgorod-Seversky, the front

line turned sharply to the north. The Bryansk Front operated there. In the strip from Shostka to Roslavl, the 13th and 50th armies were located, including 16 rifle, 2 cavalry and 1 air divisions. In the following days the front will be reinforced by four rifle divisions, two cavalry divisions, two tank brigades and two separate tank battalions, and four aviation regiments. The 2nd Panzer Group, consisting of five armored divisions, three motorized divisions, one cavalry

division and the Grossdeutschland Regiment, was sliding south. In his

on the move, she went to the rear of the Southwestern Front, but exposed the troops of Eremenko to an open flank.

Now everything depended on who would act faster. According to the usual military logic, the Bryansk Front, having roughly 27 divisions against seven, should have reached the rear of Guderian before the 2nd Panzer Group reached Romne. Given the balance of forces and operational factors that had developed, the Headquarters had some reason to hope that "Guderian and his group would be smashed to smithereens."

125

An additional problem was the 1st Panzer Group. At the end of August, she was "lost" by the intelligence of the Southwestern Front and was a dangerous and indefinite quantity.

Guderian goes south, leaving one corps against the Bryansk Front. The entire strip from Pochep to Novgorod-Seversky (more than 100 km) is guarded by the only 29th mechanized division. The

operation "hangs" on the verge of defeat, and relations in the Hitlerite leadership are sharply aggravated. Halder asks von Bock not to satisfy Guderian's demands for the return to him of all the mechanized units of his group (drawn into the battle of Smolensk). On August 29, Halder writes in his diary: "Now the front in the south is held mainly by the 3rd Panzer and 10th Motorized Divisions, which are too far apart. Such a situation has developed on the site of the Guderian group, who himself planned this operation and is to blame for everything. Halder seems to even regret the "pointlessness and randomness" of A. Eremenko's offensive: "I consider it wrong that Guderian should be helped ... [who] took an inappropriate tone towards Field Marshal von Bock." On August 31, a battle broke out in the area of Trubchevsk, where six divisions of the Bryansk

Front, supported by 250 tanks, tried to break through Guderian's flanking cover. In his memoirs, Eremenko counts over 600 enemy tanks in this sector, although there were 533 of them in the entire 2nd Panzer Group at this time, and three-quarters of its forces were deployed south of the Desna.

The junction of the 13th and 21st armies was covered, theoretically, by the 40th army. In reality, the only division, the 293rd Rifle Division, managed to turn around on a sixty-kilometer front. According to A. Yeremenko, moreover, expressed after the war, these forces were quite enough to stop the advance of the 2nd Panzer Group.

Unfortunately, Guderian did not act in the style of Eremenko. His tanks crushed Lagutin's division and, knocking down the remnants of the 2nd Airborne Corps that had not had time to turn around, quickly advanced south. The 40th Army "melted", by the beginning of September it existed only on the maps of the Headquarters and the command of the Bryansk Front.

126



August 31, 1941. SWF

Guderian does not follow von Bock's orders. He is trying to remove the super-initiative general from command, complaining about him "in the chain of command", up to and including Hitler.

On September 6, the 2nd field army of Weichs crosses the Desna. The headquarters resubordinates the 21st Army to the command of the Southwestern Front, which in the current situation is reasonable, but already useless.

Kirponos receives permission to withdraw the semi-surrounded 5th Army to the east, but, as always, too late. The Bryansk Front again inflicts its "chaotic" disorganization

both blows. The German units are withdrawing, continuing to hold the communication line of the main forces of the 2nd Panzer Group, passing through Pochep and Starodub. On September 10, Guderian captures Romny, located 250 km south of Pochep and 200 km east of Kyiv. The "fight for pace" was won by the Germans, and this is where the Kiev battle, in fact, ends. The agony of the Southwestern Front begins. -5- "Hello, comrade Kirponos, comrade Burmistrenko and comrade Tupikov. The Headquarters of

the Supreme High Command received your telegram about the occupation of Romny by the enemy and therefore about the need for a speedy withdrawal ... There is no doubt that the occupation of Romny creates a certain depressing mood, but I am sure that the Military Council of the front is far from this and will be able to cope with the episode at Romny. Wishing the command of the South-Western Front "creative success", Marshal B. Shaposhnikov demanded that the enemy's Konotop grouping be

defeated, and that troops not be removed from Kyiv. True, he promised "assistance" to the Bryansk Front. On the morning of September 11, Marshal Budyonny addressed the Headquarters with a request to allow the immediate withdrawal of the front, who was immediately removed from his post.

In the evening of the same day, the Supreme Commander categorically demanded: "Kyiv should not be left and the bridges should not be

blown up without the permission of the Headquarters." Guderian, in response to a new offensive by the Bryansk Front, removes another one and a half divisions from his open flank and throws them to the south. And the 1st tank group of Kleist, having deceived Soviet intelligence at all levels, secretly focuses on the bridgehead beyond the Dnieper captured near Kremenchug and on September 12 begins an offensive to the south, breaking through the front in the very first hours of the operation. The next day in the evening, M.

Kirponos reports to Headquarters: "The position of the troops of the front is becoming more complicated at an increasing pace: a) The enemy, who has broken through to Romny, Lokhvitsa and Vesely Podol, Khorol, has not yet been opposed to anything, except for local garrisons and fighter detachments, and his advance is going without resistance. eject

128



August 31, 1941. Bryansk Front

129

the 289th and 7th divisions will only have 14.9 in this direction, and then only with defensive tasks to prevent the defense of the Piryatin and Priluki nodes from attacking the uncovered rear of the front troops. b) The front of Kuznetsov's defense was broken completely, and the army [21st] actually switched to mobile defense. The 187th, 219th, 117th rifle divisions after the battle in the environment represent the remnants. c) Potapov's army also cannot stabilize the front and conducts a mobile defense. The enemy broke into the joints of the 37th Army on Kobyzhcha. d) The 37th Army resists more stably, but the situation in it is growing not in its favor. e) The mixing of the rear of the 5th and 21st armies began ...

f) As before, I consider the most expedient conclusion from the current situation to be the immediate withdrawal of troops from KiUra and, at this expense, the strengthening of the Kuznetsov and Potapov fronts, the transition to the offensive on Bakhmach, Krolevets, and subsequently a general withdrawal. For this to be feasible, it is necessary to help with aviation and the transition to active operations in the Glukhov direction of the Bryansk Front. At night, at 3.25, the chief of

staff of the front, Tupikov, sends a second telegram, ending with the words: "The beginning of the catastrophe you understand is a matter of a couple of days." The reaction of the Headquarters

followed immediately: "To the Commander of the South-Western Front, a copy to the Commander-in-

Chief of the South-Western Front. Major General Tupikov submitted a panic report to the General Staff. The situation, on the contrary, requires the preservation of exceptional composure and restraint by commanders of all levels. It is necessary, without succumbing to panic, to take all measures to maintain the position occupied and to hold the flanks especially firmly. Kuznetsov and Potapov must be forced to stop their retreat. It is necessary to inspire the entire composition of the front with the need to fight stubbornly, without looking back, it is necessary to follow the instructions of Comrade. Stalin given to you on 11.9. Shaposhnikov. On September 15,

Marshal Shaposhnikov will once again talk about the "mirage of encirclement", which "covers primarily the Military Council of the Southwestern Front, and then the commander of the 37th Army." Guderian is already operating 60 km to the east

130

front headquarters and 200 km east of Kyiv, where the 37th Army was defending.

Kleist advances more slowly, overcoming some resistance, but steadily. On the 16th, his tanks cut the last railway line at the disposal of the Southwestern Front.

The next day, the situation, suddenly, presented itself to the new Commander-in-Chief of the direction S. Timoshenko "in the true light." Without asking Headquarters, he verbally orders the troops to withdraw immediately. M. Kirponos, hypnotized by B. Shaposhnikov's telegrams, simply did not believe it and spent the last day he had on coordinating with the Stavka. On September 18, the tanks of Guderian and Kleist met south of Lokhvitsa. This time the Germans got a real battle of destruction.

The front was cut into five boilers. "The enemy seems to be in a big mess," writes F. Halder. Organized resistance came to an end on 26 September. The enemy captured 665,000 prisoners, 3,718 guns, and 884 tanks. This time, no one refutes the German loss data. Apparently, they, in the first approximation, corresponded to reality.

-6-

Kiev was the biggest German victory in the entire war, even in both world wars. The criminal mistakes of the Soviet command are quite obvious, as are the achievements of the Nazis. However, as I have already noted, it is not so simple.

A number of German generals generally condemn the Fuhrer's decision to carry out the Kyiv operation, considering it a mistake. In their opinion, in August 1941 there was a real opportunity to launch an offensive against Moscow. But in this case, the Army Group Center completely hung in the air and had to solve the most important strategic task of the war on its own. This situation is contrary to the foundations of military art. Yes, and purely formally: what did von Bock have at that moment? Guderian's group is tied up under Velikiye Luki. The 9th Army is fighting near Smolensk. 2nd Field Army, with any decision taken by 131

command, the operational void in the Desna region would pull south. There remains the 4th field and 2nd tank army. As they advanced towards Moscow, their forces would inevitably be diverted - and again to the open southern flank. As a result, at best, two or three field and one or two tank corps would approach Moscow. There is not the slightest reason to believe that Guderian with the defensive area of Moscow would have done better than Kleist with KiUr. In other words, the 2nd Panzer Group would have "stuck" in the city, having lost its mobility. No, from such a scenario of the development of events, I see only one option: a successful Soviet counter-offensive near Moscow, and not in December, but already in September. Hitler was certainly right in his decision. He established

interaction between the two army groups, achieved a grandiose military victory, which threw back the front beyond the Dnieper over a wide area, created the conditions for conducting operations against the Crimea and Donbass. But, most importantly, the Kiev battle freed at least the 2nd field army, which became an important prerequisite for the autumn offensive against Moscow. After Kyiv, the operational and strategic situation on the

Eastern Front
dramatically improved for the

Germans. By leaving Kiev in early August 1941, the Soviet troops would probably have avoided encirclement, but also helped the Germans to establish interaction between Army Groups South and Center without such extraordinary measures as Guderian's turn to the south. Taking into account the general situation in the southwestern direction, the greater mobility of the Wehrmacht troops, the "loss" of the 1st Panzer Group by Soviet intelligence, they would not have escaped from a heavy defeat on the left-bank Ukraine. In any case, by the beginning of September, the Southern and Southwestern Fronts would have been thrown back across the Dnieper, and the 5th Army would have been defeated by the joint efforts of the 6th and 2nd German armies. During this time, the 2nd Panzer Group, deprived of the need to make a raid on caterpillars to Lokhvitsa and back, would have defeated the troops of the Bryansk Front, captured Oryol and broke through to Tula. The Moscow battle would begin, as in the Current Reality, at the end of September, but, perhaps, in even more favorable conditions for the Wehrmacht than they were. Of course, in this scenario, Army Group South would have suffered a sensitive defeat near Rostov in October-November

132

1941, would have been forced to lift the blockade from Sevastopol and retreat to the line of the Mius River, but, very possibly, this would not have helped

Moscow. On one side of the scale - more than half a million prisoners and the largest disaster in military history. On the other hand, gaining several paces and a slight, almost imperceptible change in the global strategic balance in favor of the anti-Hitler coalition. What outweighs?

The fifth plot: a positional dead end in the north

-1

- We left Army Group "North" in early July, when Manstein's 56th tank corps captured Daugavpils, Reingart's 41st tank corps took Jekabpils (Krustpils) and crossed the Western Dvina, 18- I field army pursued the 8th Soviet army retreating to Riga, and the 16th advanced to the Western Dvina after the 4th Panzer Group. This army did not have a specific task in the current situation and rather hindered the deployment of operations beyond the Western Dvina than contributed to the offensive. On July 2, Army Group North resumed the offensive and immediately broke out beyond the Dvina with all the troops participating in the operation. This happened thanks to the confusion reigning in the headquarters of the North-Western Front, where just

there was a change of command: on July 4, instead of F. Kuznetsov, the front was headed by P. Sobennikov, who had previously commanded the 8th Army¹. According to the official Soviet version of the leadership

¹ The change of command lasted several days. On July 1, N. Vatutin was appointed chief of staff of the front, and V. Bogatkin was appointed a member of the Military Council. F. Kuznetsov handed over the case on the evening of July 3, P. Sobennikov has been signing orders since the morning of July 4. F. Ivanov took over the 8th Army from him and will lead it for the next four weeks. (In total, for the period June 1941 - April 1942, nine commanders will be replaced in the 8th Army - a kind of record.) 133

"misunderstood" the Stavka directive of June 29 and began a retreat to Pskov. The order to withdraw was given to F. Kuznetsov on 30 June. On July 1, it was canceled by the new chief of staff of the NWF N. Vatutin, and the front was given the active task of eliminating the enemy bridgeheads near Kruspils and Daugavpils. While the command decides whether the armies should advance, retreat, or conduct a hard defense, the troops are on the move and are not ready to perform any of these tasks. The order comes to the corps and divisional headquarters only on the night of July 2, it requires the 8th and 27th armies to begin active operations in the morning at 10.00. But the 4th Panzer Group went on the offensive five hours earlier, shot down units of the North-Western Front that were rebuilding for the attack, and by the end of the day broke through to Rezekne. The front headquarters again lost control of its armies, which again retreated in divergent directions, opening the road to Pskov. The German breakthrough is developing very quickly: on July 4, Reingart captures bridges across the Velikaya River, on July 6, Ostrov is

taken, and the next day, Gepner's tanks approached Pskov. In the resulting - rather simple - operational situation, von Leeb made all the mistakes that were in his power. First of all, he turns the 18th Army to Tallinn. This means that the twice defeated Soviet 8th Army, which, due to inertia, is retreating to Estonia, will suddenly have the opportunity to play a historical role: for a whole month and a half, it will distract a third of the infantry divisions of Army Group North from any meaningful combat missions.

¹ To justify von Leeb's decision, they usually refer to the importance of Tallinn as a forward base for the Baltic Fleet. But this Fleet did nothing to interfere with either Army Group North or the Barbarossa plan. By mid-July, he was under constant surveillance from the air and, moreover, was practically blocked by active minelaying. As part of the logic behind the deployment of the Barbarossa, the Germans wanted the Soviet ships to stay in Tallinn as long as possible. This was easy to achieve by simply leaving Tallinn alone.

Of course, with the rapid advance of Army Group North to the east, the 8th Army, remaining in Estonia, would have gained all the benefits of a remote flank position. That's why

diversion of some forces on her
134

Having thus occupied the 18th Army, von Leeb gave some scope to the rest of the military formations, which began to interfere with each other in the difficult, rugged, rather poor roads of the Baltic region. However, this did not bring any benefit: the commander detains the 16th army near Daugavpils. to cover the junction with Army Group Center, which at that moment was completely unthreatening. Now that the forces in the direction of the main attack were frankly lacking, von Leeb decided that the 4th Panzer Group would lose too much strength and time in the fight for the Pskov fortified area. In this regard, he orders the 56th Panzer Corps to turn around instead of Pskov to Opochna, as if changing the operational line from the Leningrad direction to Moscow. This meant either a bypass of Pskov from the south, or an advance to Velikiye Luki from the north and further movement to Valdai. Since the swamps and forests between the Velikaya and Lovat rivers did not contribute to either the first or the second maneuver, and forces were allocated for any serious actions

not enough, the operation was canceled, and the 56th Corps was returned to the Pskov direction. However, even there he was assigned an independent task: while Reingart was advancing on Leningrad through Luga, Manstein had to break through Novgorod to Chudovo. The dispersal of forces has borne fruit. Neither grouping was successful, and it is no longer so important whether the heroic resistance of the Soviet troops was the reason for this, the blockade was inevitable. But "some forces" are still not three reinforced corps!

The state of the 8th Army was no secret to the Germans. Of course, on the Tallinn bridgehead, it could be strengthened, but not radically. There were practically no free forces in the north-west of the Soviet command. Yes, and their delivery to Tallinn is associated with significant difficulties and loss of time. Under these conditions, von Leeb had every reason to hope that in the unlikely event that Soviet troops nevertheless went on the offensive from the Tallinn bridgehead, when the main forces of the army group advanced east of Lake Peipus, the observation units left in the Baltic (say, 58 -I and 291 - I division) will "get out" on their own. The risk of such a decision is immeasurably less than that taken by Guderian, turning his tank group towards Romny.

135

on the Luga defensive line, hastily built by the efforts of thousands of Leningraders, or on the conditions of the terrain. In mid-July, Manstein's troops, unexpectedly attacked near Soltsy by the 11th and 27th Soviet armies, found themselves in a critical situation. In response to this, on July 19, von Leeb stopped the offensive until the approach of the 16th Army and the restoration of communication between the Reinhart Corps and the 18th Army. The operations of Army Group North unfolded "slowly and methodically". On July 22, the German 18th

Army went on the offensive and cut the 8th Army, which was defending in Estonia, into two groups, one of which retreated to Tallinn, and the other to Narva. Note that the 4th Panzer Group, which advanced to the Luga River in its middle course, made no attempts to disrupt the withdrawal from Estonia of the 11th Corps of the 8th Army.

It would seem that after the capture of Pärnu and Tartu, nothing prevented von Leeb from leaving Tallinn alone, blockaded from land and sea, and finally ceasing to be an operational factor. Nevertheless, the direct attack of the main forces of the 18th army on the capital of Estonia continues. The size of the bridgehead is shrinking, and German attacks are becoming more and more frontal.

Accordingly, the resistance of the 10th Corps of the 8th Army and detachments of sailors thrown to defend the city is increasing. Since the Germans have lost their advantage in mobility, the defense is stubborn and steady.

The Germans have to take the city by brute force, and the daily losses of the parties immediately become comparable.

Tallinn held out until August 28, after which battles for the islands of the Moozund archipelago followed. This was done until October 22 by the 61st and 217th divisions (that is, the full 26th army corps) of the same 18th army. For almost three weeks, no active operations were conducted on the front

of the Luga River. Only on August 8, the Germans launched an offensive against Kingisepp, and on August 10, attacks resumed in the direction of Luga and Novgorod. The Luga line of defense was broken through in the north and south. In the north there was no room for maneuver - the flank rested on the open sea, all roads led in one obvious direction -

to Leningrad. On South,

where the Germans inflicted

136

the main blow, they were desperately short of strength and, above all, of infantry. As soon as the enemy advanced towards Novgorod, the Soviet command improvised with the forces of the 11th and 34th armies an offensive that was extremely dangerous for the Nazis

between lakes Ilmen and Seliger. The advance reached 60 kilometers, a deep detour of the flank of the 4th Panzer Group advancing on Novgorod began to emerge, with access to its rear.

The leadership of the OKH reacted extremely nervously. It not only removed two motorized divisions from near Novgorod and Luga, "ruling them to eliminate the crisis near Staraya Russa, not only brought the main forces of the 16th army into action in this direction, but also supported them with the elite 8th air corps and 39th m tank corps of the Gotha group, vital near Smolensk.

This massing of formations, albeit belated, led to the defeat of the 34th Army¹ and created the conditions for the further offensive of von Leeb's Army Group. Novgorod was captured on August 18, the next day the Germans reached the Leningrad-Moscow railway in the Chudov region. The headquarters of the 56th mechanized corps with the units remaining under its command reaches Demyansk, while the 41st tank corps advances directly on Leningrad, it is supported by the formations of the 18th army free from fighting for Tallinn. The connection between these operations is provided by the offensive from Chudovo to Kirishi. It is here, according to all military laws, that the main blow should be (with further development along the banks of the Volkhov to the Svir to join the Finnish army), but in reality there are almost no German troops in this area: the ubiquitous 4th Panzer Group, but without the 41st and 56th since (that is, apparently, the 290th Infantry Division). In fact, at the end of August, von Leeb was simultaneously conducting three offensives - on Tallinn, on Leningrad and "as if on Moscow" (the latter - part of the forces of the 56th Panzer Corps). It is not surprising that the operation is gradually fizzling out. For disrupting the

¹ offensive near Staraya Russa, P. Sobennikov was removed from his post front commander. He was replaced by Lieutenant General Kurochkin.

137

-2- As already mentioned, Finland started the war on June 29th. Its South-Eastern army advanced in the forests and lakes of the Karelian Isthmus. 2nd army. Karelian, operated between the Ladoga and Onega lakes. Further north, the 3rd Finnish Army Corps operated, subordinate to the German Army "Norway", which includes *two* more German corps - the 36th and mountain rifle.

According to the Barbarossa plan, the Norwegian army was to capture Murmansk with its ice-free port. The Finnish troops were given the rather vague task of "assisting the capture of Leningrad" by advancing on both sides of Lake Ladoga. The political situation in Finland was very difficult.

Participation in the war was due both to the events of 1939-1940 and to Finland's military and economic dependence on Germany. In addition, Soviet aviation on June 25 (and according to some sources, on June 22) bombed Finnish territory¹. At the same time, Finland was absolutely not interested in the defeat of the Soviet Union by Germany. In addition, there is every reason to believe that K. Mannerheim, the commander of the Finnish army and a former lieutenant general of the Russian Empire, considered total defeat impossible in principle. Therefore, it was important for K. Mannerheim to demonstrate that Finland - even under the most favorable circumstances for her - is not a threat to Leningrad and the Murmansk railway. It is very difficult to answer the question of the legality of these bombings. On the one hand, Finland did not declare war

¹ on the Soviet Union at that moment. On the other hand, she also did not declare neutrality, and she could not: German troops were located on Finnish territory, the 5th air fleet of Germany was based. Some Finnish units were directly subordinate to the German military leader - the commander of the army "Norway" N. Fankelhorst. The participation of Finland in the war was considered in the plan "Barbarossa" as an indisputable fact. IN

In such a situation, the Soviet government could not recognize Finland as a non-belligerent state. Another question is whether this was a reason to bomb Helsinki (again without a formal declaration of war)?

138

In this regard, operations on the front of the Soviet 23rd and 7th armies are clearly divided into two stages. At first, the Finns quickly and without any problems reached the old (1939) state border. Then - at the turn of the rivers Sestra and Svir - they stopped. The emerging front line lasted until mid-summer 1944 without significant changes. This state of affairs suited both parties. Finns - because they took revenge for the defeat in the "Winter War" and at the same time proved their loyalty to the former metropolis. The Soviet command - because it got the opportunity to practically withdraw troops from the Finnish front. At the same time, the armies of K. Mannerheim not only did not attempt to attack, but also prevented the transfer of German units to this direction (despite the colossal diplomatic efforts undertaken by the Germans). The only exception was the battles for Petrozavodsk, which the Karelian army took on October 2. Formally, the Finns

achieved success, which was supposed to be of strategic importance: Petrozavodsk was the final point of the Murmansk (Kirov) railway. This "thread" over 1000 km long, built by the Chinese in 1915-1916, held the entire Karelian Front on itself and, moreover, provided the only communication line with the allies at that time. However, starting the attack on Petrozavodsk, K. Mannerheim knew that shortly before the war, the Kirov railway was connected to the Arkhangelsk main line by a new branch running along the coast of the White Sea. Thus, the

Murmansk highway continued to operate. The Germans had to solve their strategic problems in this theater of operations in

alone.

According to the conditions of the terrain, the army of "Norway" advanced in several isolated directions. The mountain rifle corps operated in the direction of Murmansk and Polyarny. The 36th Army Corps tried to advance on Kandalaksha and Loukhi. The 3rd Finnish Corps, despite the displeasure of K. Mannerheim, was ordered to advance in the direction of Kemi. The Karelian army with part of its forces indicated its presence in the area of Rugozero, north of Medvezhyegorsk.

There were no roads. The Finns frankly did not want to fight, and the German troops lacked any experience of decisive attacks.

139

active actions in forests and tundra. As a result, the war from the very beginning, from July 1941, took positional forms. The front in Karelia and in the Arctic froze. The mountain rifle corps strained every effort to advance towards Murmansk, it was supported by the 5th Air Fleet, but the Germans failed to enter the operational space or seize real air superiority. On the northern strategic flank, the German troops were stuck in the Soviet defense, unable to solve any of the tasks facing them. The headquarters of the OKH regarded this with Olympian calmness, and Hitler, in his order, laid the responsibility for the defeat¹ on the conditions of the terrain.

¹ From August 12, 1941 until the end of the war, the Soviet Union continuously received military equipment through Murmansk. Arctic convoys delivered 4 million tons of cargo to the USSR, including more than 7,000 aircraft, 5,000 tanks, and a significant number of trucks.

In Soviet times, it was customary to underestimate the importance of Lend-Lease, now it is often exaggerated, but, in any case, the capture of Murmansk or any point on the Kirov railway would immediately cost the USSR 4% of total military production. But perhaps more significantly, through Murmansk, the country received extremely scarce resources, such as

rubber, aluminum, oil, medicines, including antibiotics, which the Soviet Union then practically did not produce. As the war

progressed, the importance of Murmansk decreased: supply lines began to operate through Iran and through Alaska - Chukotka. But in 1941-1942 there was no alternative to the "polar convoys". It is believed that in the event of the loss of Murmansk, the supply line could be "switched" to Arkhangelsk. But, firstly, this port freezes in winter, and secondly, its capacity would simply not be enough to serve such cargo flows that went to the USSR along the northern routes. Finally, having captured Murmansk, the Germans received at their disposal the base of the Polyarny, which meant the destruction of the "de facto" Northern Fleet, whose ships would have been forced to leave the theater. (Neither Arkhangelsk nor Dikson were intended to base warships.) In this case, the Germans would undoubtedly have been able to control the throat of the White Sea.

Thus, Murmansk and the Kirov railway on the Murmansk-Medvezhyegorsk section should have been considered as goals of strategic importance, comparable if not to Moscow and Leningrad, then, in any case, to Kiev, Donetsk, Rostov-on-Don, Grozny, Baku, Stalingrad. And we must regard the stoppage of the offensive of the Wehrmacht in the north as a heavy strategic defeat of Germany. 140

Meanwhile, the strategic position of the Soviet troops in the Arctic was very difficult. Their supply line had a "shoulder" of over 1,000 kilometers and did not run perpendicular, but parallel to the front line. In order to destroy the Karelian Front, it was enough for the Germans to break this line at a single point. As always in a country with poor roads, the outcome of the operation depended on the control of several important points. That is why the fighting in the north had to be carried out in the logic of mountain warfare, that is, to represent maneuver operations of relatively small combat groups. During the First World War in the Italian Alps, the Germans demonstrated under Caporetto "how it's done."

The goal set for the troops of N. Falkerhorst justified any risk. In the end, it is difficult to think of a more rewarding task for airborne paratroopers than the capture of key points on the railway, which runs parallel to the front at a distance of 100-200 kilometers from it. Especially if there is a continuous flow of military materials along this road.

-3-

On the night of August 28, the evacuation of the 10th Army Corps, coastal units, the rear of the 8th Army and the Baltic Fleet, Soviet institutions from Tallinn began. The defense was already falling apart. Units and formations were loaded onto vehicles under the cover of naval artillery fire. Departure and embarkation on the ships was quite organized (with a planned load of 25,300 people, 27,800 people were collected¹, however, about 5,000 military personnel remained at the Tallinn piers; at the same time, the Tobol, Vtoraya Five-Year Plan and the Krishjanis Valdemar icebreaker left empty).

Tallinn naval base was blocked by minefields
enemy; to action against the ship

¹ Over 9,000 wounded were evacuated by sea between 11 and 28 August. 2,434 people died during the crossing.

141

Lei prepared dive bombers of the 8th air corps of Richthofen. Soviet aviation, operating from the airfields of Leningrad and Kronstadt, could not cover the transport at the crossing.

Control of the movement of detachments at the crossing was not organized. The commander of the Baltic Fleet, Admiral V. Tributs, drew up the base minesweepers to ensure the breakthrough of warships (the core of the fleet), leaving the troop transports with completely insufficient minesweeping forces. The result was one of the largest convoy smashes in naval history.

"As part of the fleet operation, 153 warships and boats, as well as 75 auxiliary vessels of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet, left Tallinn. In addition, together with the forces of the fleet

there was an unidentified number of small-tonnage civilian ships and various watercraft. The latter cannot be accounted for in any way, and therefore, further we will talk exclusively about the forces and means of the subordinates of the Military Council of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet. A cruiser (100%), two leaders (100%), five destroyers out of ten (50%), six patrol ships out of nine (66%), nine submarines out of eleven (82%), two gunboats out of three reached Kronstadt (66%), ten basic minesweepers (100%), sixteen out of eighteen slow minesweepers (89%), three electromagnetic minesweepers (100%), twenty-six boat minesweepers (100%), thirteen out of fourteen torpedo boats (93%), twenty-three MO boats out of twenty-five (92%), three net-layers (100%) and 32 ships out of 75 (43%). At the same time, out of 27,800 people taken on board ships and vessels, about 11,000 people died, including a little more than 3,000 civilians. However, even such a result meant the complete bankruptcy

of von Leeb's strategy near Tallinn. On August 29, he finally took the city. However, the Baltic Fleet, with its artillery, which was very significant for subsequent events, left for Kronstadt without losing combat capability. The 8th Army and even the 10th Corps, doomed in the opinion of the German commander, defending Tallinn, suffered heavy losses, but it was not V. Platonov's "Tragedies of the Gulf of Finland" that were destroyed.

¹

142

were and took part in the defense of Leningrad. In the balance of the Army Group "North" - wasted time and losses from a direct assault on a fortified city defended by naval guns.

-4-

The capture of Tallinn allowed von Leeb to once again intensify the offensive against Leningrad. On the thirtieth, Mga was captured and control was established over the last highway supplying the city. MSU - the most

important road junction, which is the operational center of the entire position south of Lake Ladoga, was defended by the efforts of the Soviet command by a company of sappers and a combined detachment of Major Leshev without artillery and almost without cartridges. The next day, the 1st division of the NKVD tried to recapture the city, but the Germans managed to concentrate two army corps and part of the 41st since this area, so this counterattack only led to the loss of the Sinyavinsky heights and Schlissenburg dominating the area. The casemates of the Schlissenburg fortress, however, were held, which predetermined the failure of the Germans' attempts to force the Neva in the upper

reaches. On September 8, German troops reached Lake Ladoga and cut the Leningrad Front in half, cutting off the 42nd and 55th armies from the 54th and 52nd. The blockade of Leningrad

began. The Headquarters, realizing that a catastrophe was brewing in the northwestern direction, surpassing the Kyiv one in its scale and consequences, ordered the release of the city. The troops of the 54th Army were led by Marshal Kulik, "famous" for the fact that in 1943 near Kursk he advanced in the ranks of divisional columns in a ceremonial march with unfurled banners and orchestra advanced forward. There are various rumors about the battles in September 1941, but one thing is certain: the 54th Army lost its combat capability, and the Germans turned everything on

¹ Kulik, of course, was removed and demoted from marshal to major general.

143

settlements in the strip they captured between the Soviet armies.

Throughout September, von Leeb stormed Leningrad from Pushkin, Kolpin and Uritsk. The Germans captured Peterhof, their tanks came out between Strelina and

Volodarskaya to the city tram tracks: the fighting, in fact, was already going on within

the city. Tanks and infantry moved in waves to the fortified Pulkovo Heights and rolled back time after time. In fact, in these days, von Leeb acted little better than Kulik: there were no banners and an orchestra, but just like the divisions of the 54th Soviet Army, the best parts of Army Group North were crushed in direct attacks on the most protected sector of the city's defenses. Parts of the 8th Army (still the same) fortified on the Oranienbaum bridgehead, constantly creating a flank threat for the German units. Von Leeb's offensive front was so narrow that the counterattack formations of Marshal G. Zhukov (who took over the Leningrad Front on September 11), operating just 10 kilometers south of the Gulf of Finland, bypassed the German strike force and put it in a critical position.

By the way, success at Pulkovo, improbable in itself, did not promise von Leeb anything but extermination battles in a big city, perfectly prepared for such battles.

"Barricades and anti-tank obstacles with a total length of 25 kilometers were erected on the streets and intersections, 4,100 pillboxes and bunkers were built, more than 20,000 firing points were equipped in buildings. Factories, bridges, public buildings were mined and, at a signal, they would fly into the air - piles of stones and iron would fall on the head of enemy soldiers, blockages would block the way their tanks.

The civilian population, not to mention the soldiers and sailors, prepared for street fights. The idea of fighting for every house (...) was aimed at destroying the enemy army"¹. Of

course, the situation in September 1941 was critical for the defenders Leningrad. Ships of the Baltic

¹ D. Pavlov "Leningrad in the blockade". L., 1985.

144

the fleet was preparing to explode and destroy. It was believed that the city would fall any day. Von Leeb expected this, but weeks passed, and the Pulkovo Heights continued to hold. The time factor intervened. Winter was coming. After the Kyiv battle, the German command could no longer postpone the decisive offensive against Moscow. I had to agree that significant, but not decisive, successes were achieved on the flanks. This was especially true of Army Group North. Although Leningrad was "the

largest prisoner of war camp in Europe," this "camp" continued to produce ammunition and even military equipment, ensured the existence of three armies and the Baltic Fleet, and still chained Army Group North to itself. In mid-September, the OKH took the 4th Panzer Group (about

half of its available forces) from von Leeb in order to transfer it to Moscow. The offensive near Leningrad stopped completely. Here von Leeb attempted, for the first time in the entire campaign, a meaningful operational

maneuver, which, had he begun it in early September, would have led to the fall of Leningrad and a tremendous German victory in the north. A strong blow along the Volkhov River - to Tikhvin and further to the Svir - would allow German troops to link up with Finnish troops east of Lake Ladoga. The supply line along Ladoga, later called the "Road of Life" - the only highway that would allow supplying, if not the city, then at least the front, would be immediately lost. It would mean destruction.

In October, von Leeb came up with the sensible idea of capturing Tikhvin, but he no longer had mobile units. Leeb gathered on the Volkhov all the reserves that he could reach, again exposed the junction with Army Group Center (which, as

we will see in the next story, had very far-reaching consequences) and broke through the Soviet defenses.

¹ All his previous actions were conditioned either by the initial scheme of strategic deployment, or by the inertia of the offensive movement, or, finally, by the initiative of the commanders of individual corps. The exception is the Tallinn operation, which was completely independent, but completely erroneous.

145

But there was nothing to increase success. On November 8, the shock group, stretching out for a good hundred kilometers, captured Tikhvin. The German troops could not do more.

With a huge effort, the Soviet leadership quickly built a railway line going to Novaya Ladoga, bypassing Tikhvin. On November 12, the troops of the Leningrad Front launched a counteroffensive and recaptured the city. The front finally stabilized along the Volkhov River.

-5-

At the beginning of September 1941, 2,544,000 civilians remained in Leningrad, including 400,000 children. About 500,000 more people were part of the Leningrad Front. Thus, about 3,000,000 people had to be supplied through Ladoga. In addition, the city and the front needed fuel and raw materials for numerous Leningrad factories working for defense. Lake Ladoga, the largest in Europe, with depths of up to 200 meters,

is comparable to a small sea. In spring and autumn, navigation is difficult due to severe storms¹. During the period of freeze-up and ice breaking, transport through Ladoga

impossible.

Taking all factors into account, during the period from September 12 to January 1, 45,685 tons of food, or approximately 415 tons per day, were delivered to the city. In terms of one person, this corresponds to the "norms" of the supply of the Warsaw ghetto. So, speaking of "the largest concentration camp in Europe", the Germans were not so far from the truth. The

leadership of the city took a terrible step. It decided to "distribute foodstuffs in such a way that the expenditure of human energy for a day's work would be restored to some extent, at least for the category of workers whose labor will decide the fate of defense." The rest were doomed to destruction.

¹ On September 17, in a severe storm, a large towed barge sank, on which there were more than 1,200 residents of Leningrad. 188 people were rescued. This catastrophe is comparable in scale to the largest disasters at sea.



German defense in the Bottleneck

147

Soldiers in the trenches received 2,593 calories daily. This is not enough, but comparable to the rations of the personnel of the interior of the country - 2,822 calories. In the rear of the Leningrad Front, rations amounting to 1,605 calories. The workers received 1,087 calories, three times what they needed. Children under 11 - 684 calories, employees - 581 calories, dependents - 466 calories. The above norms are conditional: "... meat was rarely sold, most often it was replaced by other products: egg powder, canned food, jelly from lamb intestines, vegetable-blood brawns. There were also days when the population did not receive any meat or fat at all.

During the blockade, according to Soviet official data, 641,803 people died of starvation. Accounting for deaths among evacuees and neonatal deaths gives a figure of about 1,000,000, which is consistent with Western sources.

In this regard, even in Soviet times, it was sometimes said that Leningrad should have been surrendered, that its defense was one of the crimes of the Stalinist regime. In the era of perestroika, this idea is repeated more and more often.

However, it is not at all obvious that the fate of the inhabitants of Leningrad would be less tragic if they were not in the blockade, but in the occupation. Not to mention the fact that Hitler demanded the complete destruction of the city with the transfer of the territory liberated (from people) to the Finns, it is very doubtful that Army Group North would be able to supply the three millionth city, even if such a task was set before it.

As for the purely military consequences of the surrender of Leningrad (voluntary, in order to save civilians, or forced, if von Leeb succeeded in closing the second ring east of Lake Ladoga), the position of the Soviet Union would become desperate.

First of all, 500,000 soldiers of the Leningrad Front are taken prisoner - a catastrophe that surpasses the Minsk one and is commensurate with the Kyiv one. The Baltic Fleet is destroyed. The position of the Karelian Front is deteriorating sharply. Further, the Germans deploy the 16th and 18th armies from Malaya Vishera to Pestovo, covering the flanks with Finnish troops (in the situation that arose after the surrender of Leningrad, K.

Mannerheim will not be able to avoid at least passive participation in

148

German operations). If the surrender of the city takes place before mid-September, the Germans, of course, will not transfer the 4th Panzer Group to Vyazma, but will send it to Valdai. Further, depending on the operational situation, determined mainly by the extent to which the catastrophe near Leningrad affected the position of the North-Western Front, this tank group could attack Kalinin or, which is much more profitable, Rybinsk and Yaroslavl. In the latter case, the Germans bypass Moscow deeply from the northeast and cut the railway line going to Arkhangelsk and further along the White Sea to the Petrozavodsk-Murmansk highway. This puts the Karelian Front in a critical position: I doubt that with such a development of events, Murmansk will hold out and another catastrophe will not break out in the north. The battle for Moscow in this case will take place in a much

more

favorable conditions for the Germans than it was in the Current Reality.

-6- By mid-November, a positional front was finally established in the north. Since the tragedy of the situation in Leningrad was obvious, attempts immediately began to break through the blockade. This was done in the most obvious and most fortified of all possible directions, the advantage of which was only one: it led from the southeast by the shortest route to the Neva and Leningrad.

Today these places look the same as they did 64 years ago. A low swampy plain, flat as a table, above which the Sinyavin Heights rise 10-15 meters, fortified by the Germans and turned by them into an observation post and a key defensive position. The entire area is dominated by "the gloomy bulk of the 8th GRES, which gave the enemy not only excellent opportunities for observation, but also excellent conditions for equipping firing positions with reliable shelters in the underground floors."

In 1941, in the depths of the enemy defense, no more than a thousand meters from the coastline, there were two huge mounds of slag accumulated over 10 years of operation of the state district power station. Now

149



January 1, 1942. Northwest

150

the mounds disappeared, and the sandy quarries in front of them, where the Germans set up mortar positions, remained, as did the flyovers going from both sides to the power plant building and equal to its height near the building (heavy mortars were also standing

here). "There is also a crossroads on the left bank between two sand quarries. The soldiers call him "Spider". This is a terrible place, in attacks and counterattacks, both sides try to get around it. It is not occupied by anyone, but both ours and the German heavy batteries have shot it and are covering it with absolute accuracy. A very clear guide . " The crossing

of the Neva was possible only at night, during the day one boat could not cross a five hundred meter river.

Kühler (who succeeded von Leeb as commander of Army Group North) assumed that we would start advancing here. But he did not dare to hope that this offensive would last, with short interruptions and without any result, for 17 months. The total losses of the troops of

the Leningrad and Volkhov fronts in the battles for the Sinyavinsky bridgehead exceeded the total human casualties suffered by the United States during the entire Second World War² .

¹ A. Andreev. From the first moment to the last. M., 1984.

² "Another option" has always been. The operational direction Oranienbaum-Luga-Pskov withdrew Soviet troops to the communications of Army Group North. Therefore, failing to liquidate the Oranienbaum bridgehead in time, the Germans exposed their blockade line to danger. By canceling the permanent Sinyavino operation, it was possible to covertly concentrate a hundred thousand fighters who died in vain near the buildings of the 8th state district power station on the bridgehead. Such an army, supported by all the artillery of the Baptfleet, had every chance of breaking through the front of the 18th Army. And in the midst of Kühler's counter-maneuver, aimed at repelling a sudden threat, the North-Western Front goes on the offensive with a blow from the Staraya Russa region across Lake Ilmen and further - bypassing Novgorod, well fortified by the Germans - directly to Pskov. (This fantastic operation is described as an eventual possibility in A. Zlobin's brilliant novel The Most Distant Shore.) Using their advantage in mobility, the Germans, of course, would not have allowed the defeat of Army Group North - at least in 1941 and 1942 year. But at the same time, they would not be able to hold their positions near Leningrad and south of Lake Ladoga under any

In January 1943, twenty-two Soviet rifle divisions turned the "Neva Piglet" into a narrow, through-shooting "Neva corridor", but by that moment the war had already been unconditionally lost by the Germans on other fronts.

Plot six: Moscow - the agony of "Barbarossa"

The decisive battle of World War II was the battle for Moscow. This battle, which lasted more than six months, ended the Barbarossa's plan to defeat the Soviet Union in one fleeting campaign and placed the Reich on the verge of a military catastrophe. circumstances. Another question is that this plan required a certain tactical skill.

In the winter and spring of 1942, the Headquarters tried to implement something similar, albeit in a much worse version and with completely unsuitable performers. A double strike was planned on Lyuban - these are not the strategic flanks of the German positional front in the north, but at least not the "bottleneck" of the Sinyavinsky bridgehead. The 2nd shock army, led by the former Deputy People's Commissar of Internal Affairs G. Sokolov, went on the attack. "People were afraid of getting lost, reaching out to each other, confusing battle formations, crowding, thereby creating profitable targets for enemy artillery and aircraft strikes. Ski battalions looked much better in terms of reaction to the terrain. Unfortunately, their personnel had poor skiing skills." (K. Meretskov). Sokolov was replaced by N. Klykov, the army crossed the Volkhov and began to move towards Lyuban. By the spring thaw, the army found itself in a bag more than 70 kilometers deep and less than 10 kilometers wide, having lost all mobility. The Germans also did not have enough strength or mobility to destroy it. But the commander of the Leningrad Front, General Khozin, to whom the armies of the Volkhov Front were also subordinate during this period, forbade the withdrawal of the army. By mid-summer, the Germans found the strength to slowly squeeze the "bag" to such a size that it was shot through to the full depth. The ill Klykov was replaced by Vlasov, who surrendered to the Germans at the first opportunity and later went over to their side, leading the so-called "Russian Liberation Army" (ROA). The 2nd shock army, consisting of the 7th divisions and 6 separate brigades, left surrounded without communications, command, ammunition and food, was completely destroyed. 152

The Battle of Moscow can be seen as an attempt by the Wehrmacht to "replay" the not-so-successful Smolensk campaign, which began as the decisive battle of the war and ended in an uncertain outcome, leaving chances for both sides. In the Battle of Smolensk, the fighting armies retained the possibility of strategic maneuver (which was demonstrated by the turn of the 2nd Army and the 2nd Panzer Group to the south). Now the game was all-in. The deployment has been moved one hundred and fifty to two hundred kilometers to the east. The headquarters is Moscow - the largest economic, political and transport hub of the Soviet Union, the center of the position of the entire Eastern Front. If the Germans capture it in 1941, they have every reason to be optimistic about the future. If Moscow holds out, the Wehrmacht will face the prospect of waging a winter campaign in completely unsuitable positions advanced and threatened from the flank. In our time, one has to read that there was no battle near Moscow, and the German

offensive stopped "due to natural causes"¹. Sometimes they even claim that the battle was "lost by the Soviet troops due to mediocre command"². In fact, the operational balance by the end of the Moscow battle was in favor of the USSR, and the battle itself had a pronounced plot: both armies strained their last forces, the situation changed in the most radical way, military happiness accompanied one side or the other. One can speak of not one, but four interconnected operations, differing in the tasks of the parties, the results of the battles and their pattern.

The new offensive was, according to A. Hitler and the leadership of the OKH, the only way out of the emerging pre-crisis state.

¹ This point of view is shared by B. Liddell-Gart in the book "The Second World War". M., ACT, Terra Fantastica, 2000. For

² example: Partnov A. The defeat of Soviet troops near Moscow. Capital. 1991. No. 5.

153

By September 1941, the Reich's political situation had deteriorated. Japan began to view the military situation on the Eastern Front as not entirely favorable for Germany. The Italian General Staff spoke unofficially in the sense that the Germans overestimated their capabilities. Türkiye, Spain and France decided to remain neutral.

The population of Germany began to express dissatisfaction with the "protracted war in the east."

A. Hitler needed a victory, and a resounding victory. On the Eastern Front, there was only one goal, the achievement of which promised the proper psychological effect.

The decisive battle was being prepared in an unfavorable situation for the Germans. It was about a desperate attempt to overcome the tendency towards the formation of a positional front in Russia, to get out of the strategic crisis with tactical success. The decision, as the experience of history shows, is extremely dangerous. Directive No. 35, directing the German troops to "destroy the Timoshenko group", was signed on September 6, that is, even before the situation on the strategic flanks of the Eastern Front was finally determined. A. Hitler, however, believed that all the necessary conditions for launching a decisive offensive in the center were fulfilled. Indeed, by the beginning of September, the situation of the Soviet troops near Leningrad was assessed as "extremely difficult", and in the south - as "tragic", and one could expect that in the following weeks it would only worsen. In any case, the flanks of Army Group Center could henceforth be considered secure.

The Germans had to hurry. On September 22, the astronomical summer ends in the northern hemisphere, two or three weeks after this date, Russian dirt roads will become impassable. Three months have passed since the start of the campaign, and gradually the Soviet troops and their command gained experience in modern warfare. The Wehrmacht still had quality. Of course, the situation in

¹ early September was also extremely unfavorable for the Soviet troops. War is a "non-zero-sum game": both sides can win at the same time and, much more often, lose at the same time.

154

superiority (to a certain extent, he will retain it until 1945), but it became more and more difficult to fight.

In this situation, it is difficult to blame the Hitlerite military leadership for its decision to prematurely start the battle in the center of the strategic front. But this decision meant that the army groups would again not interact with each other, or rather, that all interaction would be reduced to strengthening von Bock's army group by transferring several divisions from the flanks. Von Bock and von

Brauchitsch had less than a month to prepare for the operation, and it was not clear until the twentieth of August whether Guderian's army would be in time for the start of the battle. In its place, the 4th Panzer Group was urgently transferred from near Leningrad, and the 40th Corps of the OKH Reserve (2nd and 5th Panzer Divisions) was intended to reinforce this group. Additionally, the 27th Army Corps, transferred from France, was introduced into the Army Group Center.

Guderian nevertheless managed to transport his tanks from near Lohvitsa to Bryansk and even insisted that his army go on the offensive two days earlier than the rest of the troops: the general needed every hour of good weather.

The inclusion of the 2nd Panzer Group in the battle line expanded the offensive front to 600 kilometers and significantly raised the mood of von Bock. Never before had so many troops been concentrated in his hands: 79 divisions (including 14 tank and 8 motorized), 1.9 million soldiers, 14,000 guns and mortars, 1,390 aircraft, 1,700 tanks, and an air defense corps .

By the beginning of the operation, it was possible to replenish the infantry divisions to 90% of the regular strength. With tanks, too, things were apparently going well: 1,700 units in fourteen divisions: 120 tanks per division, with a staff of 147-209 vehicles. But on June 22, von Bock had 1,967 tanks in seven tank divisions ...

¹ On the Soviet side, Soviet troops of three fronts acted against Army Group Center, relying on two pre-prepared defense lines (Rzhev-Vyazemskaya and Mozhaiskaya, 2,250 km of anti-tank ditches, 1,000 pillboxes and bunkers). The fronts consisted of 1.25 million people, 7,600 (according to other sources - 10,000) guns, 990 (according to Other sources - 849) tanks, 677 (according to other sources - 936) aircraft. 155

The battle plan was repeated in a worsened form by

Smolensk. It was supposed to inflict dissecting blows on both sides of the Vyazma-Moscow highway and encircle the main forces of the Western Front in the Vyazma region. The depth of the offensive did not exceed 120 kilometers. G. Goth and von Bock tried to send troops at least to Gzhatsk, but this idea was not approved by the OKH. In fact, the Germans have already abandoned the blitzkrieg and the ideas of the "deep operation"¹ .

Guderian's compounds were given a separate, not related to the general plan of the battle was to capture Oryol in cooperation with the 2nd Army.

In general, the German deployment near Moscow was the result of the implementation of the Barbarossa plan and suffered from all its hidden vices. But, it must be said that the Soviet troops, which covered the Vyazma-Moscow and Bryansk-Moscow directions with the main forces, were also built in the logic of the first days of the war.

On September 30, on a clear sunny morning, Guderian's tank group went on the offensive, bypassing Bryansk from the south. The day before, the Soviet troops themselves were active in the zone of the 2nd tank group, stumbled upon an enemy preparing to attack, suffered heavy losses and retreated, not having time or being unable to organize a defense.

By noon Guderian went into operational space. The reserves of A. Eremenko were in the Bryansk region, there was nothing to detain the German tanks. On October 1, at one o'clock in the afternoon, Sevsk was taken, located 60 kilometers east of the original front line. On October 3, the 2nd Panzer Group, having covered 200 kilometers in 72 hours, occupies Orel, which, according to the commander of the Bryansk Front, General A. Eremenko, was "outside the area assigned to the Bryansk Front."

¹ Which is very strange. The entire course of events on the Eastern Front in June-September 1941 shows that the blitzkrieg tactics invariably brought success to the Germans. As soon as they abandoned it in favor of "actions according to the rules", the operation immediately lost momentum, the Soviet troops came to their senses and began to put up stubborn resistance, forcing the Wehrmacht to spend time, effort and money on solving optional tasks.

"When the Nazis entered the city, then, according to Guderian, trams were running there. An important administrative center fell into the hands of the enemy without a fight, a major junction of railways and highways, which became the base for further actions of the Nazi troops," writes A. Eremenko, laying the blame for the surrender of Orel on the military commandant of the city. No matter

how serious the situation in the south looked, von Bock delivered the main blow in the Western Front. The 3rd Panzer Group struck across Bely, Kholm, the Dnieper River to Vyazma, and the breakthrough developed so successfully that G. Goth even began to fear that the enemy had withdrawn to rear positions in advance. The 4th Panzer Group just as easily overcame the defenses at the junction of the 24th and 43rd armies

and also began to move forward rapidly. Taking advantage of this breakthrough, the 2nd Weichs Army also went on the offensive: it bypassed Bryansk from the north, joining east of the city with the left-flank divisions of the Guderian group. On October 4, A. Hitler announced on the radio that the last decisive offensive had begun on the Eastern Front and that "the Red Army was defeated and would not be able to restore its strength." It may seem implausible, but it was from the Fuhrer's speech that the Soviet leadership learned about the start of Operation Typhoon. "The General Staff did not receive such data from the Western and Reserve Fronts ..." (K. Telegin, member of the Military Council of the Moscow District).

On the morning of the 5th, air reconnaissance data arrived: a column of tanks and motorized infantry, up to 25 kilometers long, was moving along the highway from Spas-Demyansk to Yukhnov, there were no Soviet

troops in front of it. K. Telegin did not believe it, sent pilots for the second time, for the third ("choose the best of the best!"). The Germans occupied Yukhnov and in the following days, on October 6 and 7, came very close to victory in the war, closing the encirclement near Vyazma.

The road to Moscow was open. *"Having traveled*

to the center of Maloyaroslavets, I did not meet a single living soul. The city seemed abandoned. Near the building of the district executive committee I saw two cars

— Whose cars are these? I asked, waking up the driver. -

Semyon Mikhailovich Budyonny, Comrade General of the Army. (...) - Where are you from? S. Budyonny asked. - From Konev.

157

"Well, how is he doing?" I haven't had any contact with him for over two days. Yesterday I was at the headquarters of the 43rd Army, and the front headquarters withdrew in my absence, and now I don't know where it stopped.

- I found him at 105 kilometers from Moscow, in the forest to the left, behind the railway bridge over the Protva River. They are waiting for you there. On the Western Front, unfortunately, a significant part of the forces was surrounded.

"We are no better," said S. Budyonny, "the 24th and 32nd armies are cut off. Yesterday I myself almost fell into the clutches of the enemy ...

- In whose hands is Yukhnov?

- Now I do not know. There were up to two infantry regiments on the Ugra River, but without artillery. I think that Yukhnov is in the hands of the enemy. -

Well, who covers the road from Yukhnov to Maloyaroslavets? " *When I was driving here, except for three policemen in Medyn, I didn't meet anyone*" (G.K. Zhukov) On October 6, the Headquarters

gave permission for the withdrawal of the Western, Reserve and Bryansk fronts, but this no longer mattered. In two "cauldrons" near Vyazma and Bryansk, there were 7 field directorates of the armies from the 15th, 64 divisions from the 95th, 11 tank regiments from the 13th, 50 artillery brigades from the 62nd. The summary of the German command reported the capture of 663,000 prisoners, 1,242 tanks, and 5,412 guns. Everything seemed to be over. But it was precisely in these days

that the German offensive abruptly lost momentum. There were both objective and subjective reasons for this.

The liquidation of the "boilers" continued for two weeks. Although there is no need to talk about the special stamina of the Soviet troops (German commanders, describing the battles of early September, unanimously speak of the "symptoms of decomposition" of the Red Army), the encircled armies of the three Soviet fronts attracted more than 60% of the German forces. Two weeks - not God knows what time, but during these days the Germans could not conduct an offensive near Moscow with decisive forces, since their

A hastily built communication system ensured the advance of troops only to the initial depth of the operation - 150-200 km. In order to move on, it was necessary to stretch supply lines through Bryansk and

158

Vyazma. And for this it was necessary not only to clean the cities, but also to bring them into relative order.

Further, Moscow really was the largest communications hub, the center of the entire Eastern Front. This meant that at any given time, some military units were being transferred through this city. In the critical situation that developed at the beginning of October 1941, they were all sent to the front. Finally, the weather turned bad. This

chained German aircraft to the ground, operating from pound airfields, while Soviet aircraft continued to take off from concrete paths, of which there were a lot in Moscow and near Moscow. The situation in the air for the defenders of Moscow immediately improved, especially since the Luftwaffe squadrons that continued to operate were almost entirely involved in finishing off the encircled groups near Vyazma and Rzhev. Complaints about the mudslide became a commonplace in the memoirs of

German military leaders dedicated to the battle of Moscow. Hitler's generals with rare unanimity emphasize that it was the rains and slush that stopped their victorious advance, and they do not even notice that, in fact, they sign for professional illiteracy. How else can you call the underestimation of weather factors in the planning and conduct of the operation? Or did the leadership of the Wehrmacht only in mid-October find out that it rains in central Russia in the fall, and snow falls and cold sets in in winter? In any case, with the onset of rainy autumn, German mobile troops found themselves tied to a few

paved roads. Even in June, G. Goth complained that the Russian pound facts were unsuitable for French-made wheeled vehicles. Is it any wonder that at the height of autumn they became an insurmountable obstacle for the German tanks with their narrow tracks? And when the frost hit, and the broken roads were covered with ice, it turned out that the traction force of the tracks with the surface was insufficient even to overcome a slight climb. G. Zhukov, with all his shortcomings as a person and military leader, was distinguished by his firm character and the ability to draw practical

conclusions from general theoretical premises. By mid-October, he concluded that, due to weather conditions, about 159

The enemy can only conduct focal actions that can be countered by throwing small but persistent units into the tank-dangerous directions. And such units, with experience in combat, accustomed to hiding in the folds of the terrain, capable of using a clear advantage in mobility, which, in the conditions of the autumn thaw, the T-34 acquired over the Pz-III and Pz-IV, were already in the fourth month of the war. G. Guderian

writes following the results of the collision of the 24th mechanized corps with the tank brigade of M. Katukov: "Heavy battles had an impact on our officers and soldiers. And it was not a physical, but a mental shock that could not be ignored. And the fact that our best officers were so strongly suppressed as a result of recent battles was amazing.

But the main reason that stopped the advance of the Germans near Moscow was not the mudslide, not the heroic defense of the Soviet troops, not even the skillful actions of G. Zhukov, who prevented the "ball" with minimal means

roll freely on an inclined plane", but the mistakes made by the German command. A number of

sources say that after Vyazma, euphoria seized the Hitlerite leadership: the generals considered that now they could deal with the Soviets "any way." In fact, the eccentric nature of the operations in the second half of October had the same reason as the inconsistency in the actions of the Wehrmacht armies in July. As already mentioned, the Battle of Moscow is "Barbarossa" in miniature. The Typhoon was an excellent first strike plan, but the further course of operations was very vaguely visible in it and was the subject of discussion. Such a discussion, as always, ended in a compromise, combining the unpleasant with the useless and placing unsolvable tasks on the advancing armies.

So, G. Guderian, who advanced east of Orel, was ordered to liquidate the encircled troops of the Bryansk Front, having mastered the blow from the east of the city of Bryansk, while simultaneously conducting "enhanced reconnaissance" in the direction of Volkhov, Mtsensk and Tula. Brauchitsch, having completely lost his sense of reality, additionally wished that the 2nd Panzer Group also captured Kursk, and then advanced towards Voronezh. A. Hitler, in turn, sent a tank group 160

pu to Ryazan. Somewhat later, F. Halder would send G. Guderian to Gorky, to which the chief of staff of the 2nd Panzer Group would reply: "It is not May now, and we are

not in France. " The third tank group was oriented towards Kalinin, Torzhok and Ostashkov - to connect with Army Group North, which did not know about this and continued to storm Leningrad, keeping the main forces on the northern flank. The fourth tank group was to surround Moscow and further advance to Rybinsk and Yaroslavl. Army Group Center launched a fan-shaped offensive in the conditions of slush, and its strike formations quickly lost their penetrating power. By mid-October the offensive had lost its guiding idea and was doomed to failure. But the attack still continued. On October 11, Medyn was taken, on October 12 - Kaluga. On October 14, the

1st Panzer Division of the 41st Mechanized Corps of the G. Goth group broke into Kalinin. But on this day, von Leeb officially announced that the 16th Army could not advance towards G. Hoth due to difficult terrain, blockages on the roads and minefields. In fact, Leeb was planning the Tikhvin operation these days, and the demands of the leadership of the OKH and von Bock to cover the junction of army groups with an attack on Valdai seemed inappropriate to him. Now von Bock had no choice but to stop the attack on Torzhok, which was acquiring the character of a dangerous

and senseless adventure, and return the 3rd Panzer Group to the Moscow direction. The price of this decision was the turn of the 9th Army with the front to the north. Now it fell to the task of defending the junction of army groups. This meant that the 9th Army would not be involved in the attack on Moscow. But the 2nd Panzer Group also lost freedom of maneuver, forced to assist either the 2nd Field Army (which was

"pulled" to the south - to Kursk and Voronezh), or the 4th Field Army. By mid-October, 271 remained in the 2nd Panzer Group serviceable tank, in the 3rd - 259. Only E. Gepner had a

¹ successful situation - 710 vehicles. A total of 1,240 machines out of 1,700 launched an offensive. 161

army advancing on Moscow. The occupation of Kursk (November 2) exhausted the possibilities of the Weichs troops. The 2nd Army stopped and began to prepare for wintering.

Von Bock understood that the offensive had stopped, and not because of the resistance of the enemy - in mid-October, Moscow could be defended by 8-10 divisions, but because of a violation of the interaction of German troops. He writes in his diary: "In total, all this can only be assessed as nothing. The dismemberment of the battle formations of the army group and the terrible weather have led to the fact that we are sitting still. And the Russians are gaining time in order to replenish their defeated divisions and strengthen the defense, especially since they have a lot of railways and highways near Moscow in their hands. It's very bad!" -2- October 19 martial law was introduced in Moscow.

There is a continuous transfer to the front of divisions from Central Asia, the Far East, and Siberia. New 16th, 5th, 43rd, 49th, 35th armies, eight tank and two mechanized brigades are being formed. By October 22, German intelligence already had 38 rifle, 8 cavalry, 2 tank divisions and 17 tank brigades in the Moscow region (which is somewhat overestimated, but the trend was guessed correctly). Under these conditions, von Bock stopped the offensive in order to give the troops a break and regroup their units for a new strategic operation.

The offensive was planned "from a sheet" - there was neither time nor energy for a detailed analysis of the situation and the search for operational capabilities. Units and formations were introduced into battle "as soon as they were ready." Formally, November 15 was set as the date for the resumption of the battle, but in reality the 4th Army began active operations on November 18, and the SS Reich division only on the 19th. The plans were quite extensive: again we are talking about Rybinsk, Yaroslavl and Gorky, about a huge "ring" in the Moscow region - but no one doubts the unrealism of these plans. In reality, the Germans simply do not have the strength to double the coverage of the giant city, and the problems

162

with the supply of the 2nd Panzer Group remain extremely sharp. As a result, von Bock simply sent all three tank groups directly to Moscow - through Tula-Kashira and through Klin-Solnechnogorsk.

The deployment of the Barbarossa plan has reached its climax. On November 15, 1941, nine German, two Romanian, two Finnish armies, a certain number of Italian, Hungarian and Slovak troops were operating on the Eastern Front. Of these forces: the "Norway" army is waging an inconclusive and long-lost hope for success battle in the Murmansk region, the Finnish armed forces are securing the blockade of Leningrad from the north and supporting the front on the Svir River. The 18th army is blocking Leningrad from the south and west, the 16th is advancing on Tikhvin. The 9th Army, with its front to the north, covers the flank of Army Group Center and provides some kind of communication between the troops of Leeb and von Bock. The 4th Army, the only one, is preparing to attack Moscow. It is supported by the 2nd, 3rd and 4th tank groups, exhausted to the limit. 2nd Army defends near Voronezh. The sixth is advancing on Kharkov, and the 17th, together with the Italian and Hungarian corps, is advancing on Voroshilovgrad. The 1st Panzer is fighting in the Donbass, trying to break through to Rostov. The 11th Army, commanded by E. Manstein in September, together with the Romanian troops subordinate to it, the German command did not find a better task than the struggle for the Crimea and the capture of the fortress of Sevastopol.

Thus, the natural course of events laid down in the Barbarossa directive led the German troops to the following operational balance:

only one army out of fourteen operates in the direction of the main attack (counting the Hungarian, Slovak, Italian contingents as one army) . True, three out of four tank groups were involved in the attack on Moscow, but in the specific conditions of winters, to complete the situation, the

¹ high command also managed to withdraw a significant part of the aircraft from Army Group Center, which was sent to the Mediterranean Sea. As a result, the advantage in the air turned out to be with the Soviet troops - 1,138 vehicles against 580). Meanwhile, in modern warfare, an offensive is a shift in the line of action of aviation forward.

163

Of the battles for fortified lines of defense and, in the future, for a million-strong city, this did not compensate for the lack of infantry. And there were few tanks left in the tank groups. Guderian, for example, has only one hundred and fifty.

In winter, in conditions of cold and short daylight hours, the use of tanks was fraught with great difficulties. The Germans did not fight at night. In the morning it was necessary to start capricious motors of cars not designed for Russian cold. Attempts to warm up the tank engines lasted several hours, during which the direction of the impending attack became obvious even to the blind and deaf. This was followed by an offensive attempt, and the tanks practically could not leave the paved roads, they got stuck in the snow. And then night fell, and the battle was interrupted until the next morning. The 9th Army was able, at least, to push back the Soviet troops to the Volga,

where it went on the defensive, having exhausted its role in the decisive battle. The 3rd Panzer Group began to advance towards Klin. The 4th in three days of fighting advanced only 4-6 kilometers. On the 19th, E. Gepner put into action the 40th and 46th mechanized corps at the junction of the Western and Kalinin fronts. This brought success: the Germans occupied Klin and Solnechnogorsk on November 23, and on the 25th they forced the Istra reservoir. Fighting is already taking place on the immediate approaches to Moscow, there is no question of capturing the Soviet capital. In the south, Guderian, whose army links the active and passive sections of the German

front (4th and 2nd field armies), is trying to take Tula and at the same time, in fulfillment of von Bock's order, advance to Kashira. The 2nd Panzer Group is engaged in focal battles in five different directions - from the northwest to the south. Tula is holding out, and this means that G. Guderian cannot organize the supply of his divisions operating to the east of the city.

F. Halder is again trying to send troops to Yaroslavl and Gorky. Background Bock tells him that he "would be happy with any success in any direction."

The 3rd Panzer Group, whose left flank stretched more and more as it moved forward, reached the Moscow-Volga Canal and crossed in the Yakhroma area to the eastern bank, where it was stopped. Forsiro attempt

164

The canal was disrupted on a wide front, as it only partially froze, and the Russians, who had pumping stations at their disposal, opened the floodgates of the Istra reservoir. By this time, only 77 tanks remained in the 3rd Panzer Group. The fourth year on December 1 occupied

Krasnaya Polyana¹ (this is already the outskirts of Moscow, 27 kilometers from the Kremlin, whose towers the German officers now saw with binoculars). Infantry formations of the 4th Field Army tried to break through to Moscow on December 1-3 in the area of Zvenigorod and Narofominsk. The front was "almost broken through", the Germans reached the village of Burtsevo, 30 km away. from Moscow, but here they were stopped by a counterattack and forced to retreat to their original positions.

By the first days of December, all German units, voluntarily or involuntarily, went over to the defensive. But the order to attack has not been canceled, so here and there attempts to break through are continuing, which have clearly lost their guiding thought. Again there are gaps with the groups "North" and "South". And in reserve at von Bock -

not a single division . To top it all off, a crisis emerged on the strategic flanks: von Leeb lost the Tikhvin operation, and Kleist's army was thrown back from Rostov. Germany was losing strategic

initiative. And in these conditions, G. Zhukov

brought two fresh armies into battle.

-3-

The front line of Army Group Center was a broken double arc. It stretched from Ostashkov through Kalinin and the Moscow-Volga canal to the Moscow ring road, again leaning to the west and about Mary the 4th Panzer Group was "lucky". In September, she

went to the outskirts of Leningrad and "almost captured the city." In November-December, she reached the outskirts of Moscow and again was unable to complete the operation. The following year, 1942, the German command will send the 4th vol. gr. to Stalingrad ...

² At the disposal of the OKH command remained the Slovak security division and 4 Hungarian brigades, OKW kept 6.5 divisions free. 165

Diana Klina turned sharply to the south. South of the Oka, the fighting was of a focal nature, and there was no continuous line of defense at all: the troops were located in the area of Tula, Yasnaya Polyana, Serebryanye Prudy, Mikhailov. Further south, the 2nd Army covered the direction to Kursk. The supply could not be established: the German steam locomotives were not adapted to the conditions of the Russian winter. The troops were left without fuel and ammunition, and there were no warm uniforms¹ . On December 16, in the 6th Panzer Division, the 3rd t. gr. 180 combat-ready soldiers remained, in the 7th - 200. The 2nd tank army totaled 40 tanks.

The operational situation favored a counter-offensive with decisive goals. An attack from the north on Klin threatened the 3rd and 4th Panzer Groups with immediate destruction, Guderian's troops were already in the operational "bag", and an effort had to be made to find a direction of attack in which the neck was not immediately tightened.

But the Soviet troops in the winter of 1941 were not yet ready for maneuverable offensive operations. Counterattacks near Moscow were launched not against the flanks, but along the front of the advancing German groups. This gave the German command the opportunity to save the Army Group Center, which was threatened with destruction.

On December 8, the German armies on the Eastern Front finally go over to the defensive. A. Hitler demands to fight hard on the lines occupied by the troops. From now on, the division commander had no right to change the front without the sanction of the high command. This lost one of the main advantages of the German army - the mobility, flexibility, initiative of commanders of all degrees. But the Fuhrer believed, and probably rightly, that if the Center group was allowed to withdraw now, the troops would run away, and it would be impossible to stop them.

¹ Few people know that in the course and outcome of the Battle of Moscow, Mongolia played a significant role, then very friendly towards the USSR. The Mongols did not send their soldiers to the front, but they supplied the Red Army units fighting near Moscow with mutton sheepskin coats. 166

"About 80 people were brought in, forty of them with frostbite of the 2nd and 3rd degrees ... People fall where they stand from fatigue. (...) Sappers blow up tanks and anti-aircraft guns... Rear units... set fire to abandoned villages. Flames light up the night sky. (...) The tanks were filled with

50 liters of fuel, a grenade is enough to set everything on fire. A meter-high column of fire rises upward... Exhausted horses can no longer pull the wagons and die. (...) On the road now and then lie

boxes of ammunition, boxes of shells ... They are already mountains ... Broken cars. Scattered cartridges ... completely lowered figures roam everywhere in obscene form, like vagabonds, like the last bastard ... (...)

The small town was literally packed with cars, tanks and armored cars, intact and mutilated. Trucks, staff vehicles, buses stood in every yard. Motorcycles and bicycles lay in the hundreds. Dozens of abandoned guns stuck out along the roads and in the snowy fields around the city.

(...) Residents... told me what kind of dumps played out on the road because of the seats in the cars. The German infantrymen forced tankers to pour gasoline from tanks into transport vehicles so that as many people as possible could leave on them. (K. Simonov) The crisis

developed in the north and in the south. On December 9, G. Zhukov categorically forbade the conduct of frontal battles, demanding to organize an operational maneuver. But the grouping of troops did not correspond to the scheme of maneuver, and the battle continued on both sides due to the inertia of previous orders. At midnight on December 16, a telegram from von Bock went to the formations of the 2nd, 4th, 9th armies, 2nd tank army, forbidding withdrawal from their positions: "Reinforcements are not expected in the near future," wrote the commander of the army group. "Reality needs to be faced." This was von Bock's last

order. On December 19, he surrendered command to von Kluge. Duties of von Brauchitsch. dismissed, A. Hitler took over¹ .

¹ Runstedt and Leeb also lost their posts.

167

A. Hitler gives the order "on scorched earth." Withdrawal is allowed only by order and in the presence of a rear position. During the withdrawal, all settlements left by the German army are to be destroyed.

G. Guderian refused to follow the order "On the use of troops to the end", saying to von Kluge: "I command the army in such unusual circumstances as my conscience tells me." On December 25, he submitted his resignation, which was immediately accepted. E. Gepner was less fortunate. For the withdrawal of the 20th Corps, on January 4, he was removed from his post and "expelled" from the army without the right to wear a uniform. On January 15, F. Model replaced Strauss as commander of the 9th Army; After 10 days, the new commander will write in his report that there are approximately two officers, twelve non-commissioned officers and sixty soldiers left in the battalions. "Nervous seizures are noted." Understaffing in the Army Group "Center" reached 381.5 thousand

Human.

Worst of all was the case with mobile troops. During December-January, their losses increased by another 947 units, and now a total of 140 vehicles remained in the 16 tank divisions. In addition, the Wehrmacht lost over 100,000 vehicles and about 200,000 horses. It was not possible to cover these losses. From now on, Germany practically loses the ability to conduct highly maneuverable operations.

-4-

Let's pay tribute to the "old" and "new" command of the Wehrmacht. In the most difficult winter conditions, for which the German troops were not prepared either technically, or physically, or psychologically, in the face of an unexpected loss of initiative and the introduction of more and more new divisions by the enemy, they managed, although not without the help of the Red Army, to find an opportunity don't lose right away.

By the end of December, the front temporarily stabilized along the Oka line. January 15

at 21.00, the directive on the withdrawal of troops to a new defense finally went to the headquarters of Army Group Center

168

a line to the east of Rzhev, Gzhatsk, Yukhnov. The meaning of the operational decision was to build a defense based on road junctions and urban centers. In winter conditions, the Germans could hold such bastions as Rzhev indefinitely. Meanwhile, as long as the communication nodes of the position remained in their hands, any offensive by the Red Army was fraught with risk. The German troops found themselves in better conditions both for the rest of the personnel and for the rapid regrouping of forces. The "scorched earth order" was strictly

carried out, therefore, the Soviet armies, which, by the way, did not have experience in offensive battles and, moreover, persecution, experienced growing difficulties as they moved forward, all the more significant because it was during these months that the Red Army was experiencing a crisis of military equipment. There was not enough ammunition, especially artillery shells. It became more and more difficult to supply the troops that had come off the roads in the conditions of a snowy winter. In the orders of the Headquarters,

the scale of operations is invariably increasing: it is no longer about counterattacks, but about a general offensive with the aim of encircling and defeating the main forces of Army Group Center. As usual, the commanders on the ground understand the order for a general offensive literally: just as the German army two months ago, so now the Red Army is operating in divergent directions and is waging three independent battles - near Leningrad, near Moscow and in the Donbass. On January 22, 1942,

formations of the 9th Army, supported by the 8th Aviation Corps, struck west of Rzhev and cut the communications of the 29th and 39th Soviet armies, closing the torn line of defense of the 9th Army. A similar counterattack on February 3 eliminated the crisis near Vyazma, where a group of the 33rd Army led by General Efremov was surrounded. The fighting in this direction continued until April 20, 1942, but it was not possible to release the encircled grouping. In April, Efremov's group tried to break through "to the mainland", but was almost completely destroyed, its commander shot himself.

By the beginning of February, the Germans will finally eliminate the crisis in the band of the group armies "Center". Although formally

169

The action of the Red Army continued throughout March and most of April, it was already "zeal beyond reason." The Germans in

the winter of 1941-1942 avoided total catastrophe on the Eastern Front. However, for Barbarossa, this did not matter. The concept of lightning war was dead: the 2nd and 3rd Panzer Groups (renamed armies) had suffered such losses in equipment that they would never again be able to conduct operations with decisive goals. In the 1st and 4th Panzer Armies that remained "on wheels", the proportion of infantry increased sharply. The degree of motorization of the armed forces was reduced: in the spring of 1942, in order to ensure minimal mobility for Army Group South, it would be necessary to completely "undress" the tank and motorized divisions of the North and Center groups.

From now on, we could only talk about a protracted war. And Germany in 1942 was not able to wage such a war. It was too far behind in terms of economic opportunities, the release of weapons and mobilization reserves from the coalition of Great Britain with the Soviet Union, to which the United States of America joined on December 8, 1941.

Many bitter words can be said about the Soviet counteroffensive.

near Moscow, direct and unsophisticated. But that didn't really matter anymore.

Alexander Alekhine was once asked why he preferred to win a piece for a pawn in one move and then "squeeze" the opponent in the endgame for quite a long time instead of winning with an elegant five-move combination. The great chess player shrugged his shoulders: "You see," he replied, "I actually thought that, left without a piece and any compensation for it, my partner would immediately surrender" ...

The seventh plot: "Alternative" "Barbarossa"

We have come to the end of the story of the "War of the OKH", a lightning campaign that lasted half a year: from the day of the summer to the day of the winter solstice.

(Fights of the last decade de

170

October - early January in the logic of "Barbarossa" are the "post mortem" stage, and "the general offensive of the Red Army in the winter of 1942 and the German counterattacks near Vyazma and Rzhev already belong to the concept of a protracted total war, which had nothing to do with the largest offensive operation of the Wehrmacht, nor with the plans of the leadership of the OKH, which, let me remind you, considered the entire Russian campaign as an episode in the war against England.)

The deployment of the Barbarossa plan was the beginning of the end of the Third Reich. But the Soviet Union also suffered heavy, irreplaceable losses in the summer and autumn of 1941. There were moments when the country was on the verge of total military defeat. In July near Smolensk, in September near Kiev and near Leningrad, in October near Moscow, the Wehrmacht was on the verge of a decisive victory.

In this regard, two questions are natural:

Firstly, could the Soviet Union repel the enemy offensive without bringing German troops to the Pulkovo Heights, Krasnaya Polyana, Tula and the lower reaches of the Don River? And, secondly, did the Germans have a strategy that would allow them to achieve the defeat of the Soviet Union in 1941 and withdraw it from the war no later than the spring of 1942?

-1

- In the summer of 1941, the Wehrmacht managed to achieve complete surprise. The disinformation campaign, explaining the deployment of troops in East Prussia, Poland and Romania, as "a diversionary maneuver before the invasion of England", was crowned with success.). However, there were quite a lot of "leaks" of information at all levels, and the Soviet military raz-. intelligence saw something, and the radio surveillance services clearly recorded an increase in the traffic of the German radio stations in May and June with a sharp cessation of negotiations on June 19-20. Appropriate conclusions were drawn. In any case, the command of the Baltic Fleet already in May 1941 of the year took care of covering the Moosund Islands

171

and the Gulf of Finland. On June 19, readiness No. 2 was declared in the fleet, which implies continuous air reconnaissance and the dispatch of ship patrols to the sea. In the Baltic Military District, a few days before the start of the war, the deployment of field headquarters begins, measures are taken to protect airfields, and barbed wire is hung. At midnight on June 22, four hours before the start of the war, the Baltic Fleet was already in readiness No. 1.

These or other "measures" were taken in the Black Sea Fleet and in the Odessa Military District; the headquarters of M. Kirponos acted with an eye on Moscow,

demanding "not to give rise to provocations", but also in the zone of the future Southwestern Front, under the responsibility of military commanders, the troops occupied fortified areas, artillery, under the pretext of exercises, was withdrawn from the barracks and deployed around the training grounds, Only D. Pavlov in Minsk strictly pursued the line "war is not will".

In general, the pre-mobilization measures of the Soviet troops were, of course, completely insufficient, and they were carried out on the enthusiasm of individual commanders, and in secret not only from the "potential enemy", but also from their own military authorities. These actions, however, weakened the effect of the first strike and, in any case, saved the ships of the Baltic and Black Sea fleets and some of the Soviet aviation. Accordingly, an obvious "alternative" is emerging, in which the Soviet top military and political leadership takes the intelligence

data coming in all spring more seriously than it was in the Current Reality. It is not necessary to delve so deeply into the thinking of the Nazi commanders in order to answer the question of I. Stalin: "Why?" Schlieffen substantiated the need for a "rehabilitation" of the Eastern Front within the framework of the war in the West; the Germans actively discussed this problem in the interwar period. And then, what else could the Wehrmacht do in the summer of 1941? The operation against England should have begun earlier, in April or May. In the Mediterranean, the Germans captured Crete and "for some reason" stopped operations. In this logic, the "war of the OKH" was calculated unambiguously.

A. Vasilevsky, apparently, understood everything even before the May holidays of 1941. Concluding that the war could start at

172

any day (after all, we were just lucky that the German General Staff delayed the transfer of the 1st Panzer Group from the Balkan Peninsula to Poland, and the start of the 1941 campaign of the year had to be delayed until the end of June), that it is too late to change the deployment of the covering armies, he is trying plan a preemptive strike "from sight", but neither G. Zhukov nor I. Stalin, who believe that there is still time to create a new war plan, and an impromptu strike with such cumbersome formations as the Soviet armies of cover, is deprived any chance of success .

But if it was too late to change the deployment scheme, then there was still time to prepare defense on the scale of districts, armies, corps, divisions, and finally, regiments and battalions. And it is quite possible to imagine a situation in which the Soviet leadership, formally continuing to insist on friendly relations with Germany, tacitly supports the initiative of the districts that spontaneously began their local preparations for war.

Since the date of the start of the war was determined by the abrupt cessation of radio exchange with an accuracy of 24-48 hours (the leadership of the Baltic Fleet proceeded from this, declaring "Readiness No. 1" on June 21 at 23.37), it was possible immediately before the German offensive, in the last peaceful hours, to raise troops , take up defensive positions and, most importantly, prepare aviation to repel the first enemy air strike.

This strategic scheme is mentioned in S. Anisimov's "Option "Bis" and is discussed in detail by V. Zvyagintsev in the novel "Odysseus leaves Ithaca". There it is called "Strategic Surprise in Defence": *"From a three-kilometer height, the morning haze against the backdrop of continuous forests does not*

floating below, a kilometer below, are immediately noticeable.

¹ Perhaps it is in this logic that the well-known "TASS Message" and the constant directives "do not give rise to provocations" should be read. The Soviet command did not have time to modify the deployment plan of 1941, built in the ideology of positional defense.

At the same time, J. Stalin believed that in order to abandon the Non-Aggression Pact (Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact), A. Hitler would need some kind of formal reason. 173

even, as drawn on celluloid tablets, nines "Yu-88" and "Xe-111". And then, as in a mysterious picture, where, when you look closely, you can no longer see anything but the main picture, the entire field of view was filled with bombers marching, as if in a parade. The cockpit lights flash in the rising sun, the circles of propellers are foggy, behind the plates of flintglass armored glass sit young, brave, famous in the newsreels "Di Deutsche Wohenschau" heroes of crushing blows on London, Narvik, Warsaw, Athens, Rotterdam, twenty-five and thirty-year-old ober- lieutenants, hauptmanns and majors, holders of bronze, iron and knight's crosses of all classes and categories, ready for new victories and the next awards. Clearly go, skillfully, beautifully. And - without fighter cover. And why is it? It's not the

snub-nosed "donkeys" who are afraid that they are now sleeping below and who are not destined to take off anymore. 800 should burn them right in the parking lots of the few active, long-explored, along and across the airfields filmed. Another 400 will be shot down in the air by a five times superior enemy. So it was. Therefore, one must think that the first thing that the heroes of the Luftwaffe will experience,

who managed to see the "I-sixteenth" and "Seagulls" diving on them, is surprise. Sincere and even outraged. Well, we didn't agree! (...)

The 161st air regiment - 62 fighters, the 162nd - 54, the 163rd - 59, the 160th - 60: the entire fighter air division of an unheard-of composition after June 22 (during the war the divisions were smaller than now the regiments) fell upon the bombers 2th air fleet, inflicting its sudden and terrible blow. And many, probably, curses sounded in those minutes on the air against their aviation generals, the Lord God and the Fuhrer himself from the lips of the heroes of the Luftwaffe burning in the flames of aviation gasoline and duralumin.

Probably, what is happening can only be compared with what should have happened not with the German, but with the Soviet Air Force this morning, when the airfields clogged with rows of aircraft were on fire, and those who were not killed immediately, even in their sleep, in despair, swearing, swallowing tears of impotent rage, or tried to take off under fire, often even with unloaded machine guns. 174

(...)

The fighters of the 1st echelon, scorched by fire, were still landing, and high-speed bombers "SB" and dive bombers "Pe-2" under the cover of "Seagulls" were already going towards them, two thousand meters higher - "IL-4", and with an excess of another kilometer - three regiments of aircraft "LAGG" and "MIG".

Everything that followed happened as in a bad exercise, where winners and losers.

Soared up to cover their beaten bombers "Messers" in emphasis stumbled upon the waves of "SB" and got involved in a battle with the "Seagulls". It is known that the Messerschmitt outperforms the Chaika in speed by more than a hundred and fifty kilometers, but here the battle was dictated by the speeds of the SB, and the nimble biplanes, clearly outplaying the Germans in maneuver, easily escaped under the protection of

the fire of their bombers if necessary. And while the air carousel, firing, roaring engines and crossed out from top to bottom with the smoke of burning cars above the ground itself, slowly (three hundred and fifty kilometers per hour) shifted to the west, the IL-4 and DB-Zf groups slipped almost unnoticed higher and covered the airfields with a bomb carpet, where the remnants of the first wave of Germans had just landed.

The constant weakness of the German command, both Kaiser's and Hitler's, turned out to be that it easily fell into a state close to panic, with a sharp, unforeseen change in the situation.

And now, hasty commands from below forced their fighters to turn to parry a new immediate danger. The air battle took place in a very limited theater, and maneuvering forces was not difficult. In other circumstances, this could be a plus for the Germans. Not having exhausted even half of their fuel supply, the Messerschmitts turned west to their bases, counting on a significant gain in speed. And they managed to intercept the "ILs" bombing from the horizon. The trap worked. From a height, MIGs and LAGGs fell upon the Germans - just those aircraft that surpassed the Messers in their tactical and technical data and, in addition, with full ammunition.

(...)

175

Motorized infantry on trucks and armored personnel carriers, clogged all the front-line roads, firing positions of openly standing artillery, tank columns - such a target that you couldn't think of a better one. And the losses of the ground forces, which had not even had time to come into combat contact with the units of the Red Army, turned out to be unthinkably large for the Germans. (...) By evening, the

Germans almost did not fly, even to support their attackers border and troops beaten from the air.

And for the night he had something else. Also from other times. Two hundred "U-2" and "R-5" collected from all training regiments and flying clubs. Again, on the advice of Markov. Five groups of forty vehicles for continuous impact on the rear with fragmentation bombs and just hand grenades. From about

seventeen o'clock on June 22, it began to become clear that History has taken a turn anyway. (...)

By the end of the day, judging by the maps, the Germans did not manage to seize the strategic initiative anywhere, in some places they advanced fifteen to twenty kilometers, but this was expected, but at other points the flanks of the attacking formations were subjected to continuous attacks and the losses of the enemy second echelons were heavy. Nowhere did our troops

run and were not surrounded, from the very border the German infantry was forced to deploy battle formations in full accordance with their charters, now and then bumping into dense barrage artillery fire, lying down and in places even digging in. Thus, all the schedules for the implementation of the immediate and subsequent tasks were disrupted at the very beginning.

And if by the evening of the first day of fighting the Hitlerite General Staff had calculated the pace of advance and losses, correlated them with the distance to Moscow or at least Smolensk, then, perhaps, they would have come to the optimal decision to delay, before it was too late, the invasion army back, beyond the border line and pass off everything that happened as a major border conflict. How did the Japanese at Khalkhin Gol. Perhaps that would be better for everyone.

(...)

The first report of the Sovinformburo, transmitted after dinner, I repeat almost verbatim the one that was also heard in the last re

176

alities. Almost along the entire length of the state border, our troops successfully repulse the aggressor, there are insignificant enemy penetrations into Soviet territory, the field units of the Red Army advance towards the enemy in order to defeat and destroy. The only difference between this summary and that

was the degree of reliability of the information. There was a solid lie, here is the pure truth .

Neither V. Zvyagintsev nor S. Anisimov have any particular illusions about the combat effectiveness of the Red Army in June 1941. In both novels, the Germans still break through the Soviet defenses in Belarus and Ukraine, but not immediately and at a very high price. As a result, the Barbarossa finally breaks down by the autumn of 1941. The further course of the war in general resembles the Current Reality, but the plot of "Liberation" unfolds much faster and with less blood. Playing back the

operations of 1941 for the Red Army, it is not difficult to find an operational solution that is adequate even for the most difficult situation that has developed after a really sudden attack by the Wehrmacht.

First of all, retreat routes and intermediate nodes of resistance are assigned to the troops. Mechanized corps are used for short partial counterattacks against the flanks of the advancing enemy. The main task of these counterattacks is not so much to stop the enemy and inflict . him serious losses, how much to cover the withdrawal of the armies of the first line. The position of the Western Dvina-Dnepr (formally: Riga-Daugavpils-Vitebsk-Mogilev-Rogachev-Pripyat-Kyiv-Odessa) is declared to be the retreat line. The remnants of the mechanized corps are withdrawn beyond the line of resistance, forming mobile groups of fronts. The armies of the second strategic echelon close the gaps in the front line, the armies of the third echelon form operational reserves. If the enemy succeeds in preempting the Soviet troops in certain directions with access to the line of resistance, seizing bridges and forcing the Dvina or Dnieper (as in the Current V. Zvyagintsev "Odysseus leaves Ithaca" (cited with abbreviation).

¹

177

E. Manstein succeeded near Daugavpils), then the second echelon armies are given the task of eliminating the bridgehead by actions against the flanks of the enemy strike groups that have broken through, while aviation and sabotage groups are making every effort to destroy strategically important bridges and main railways in the rear of these groups.

In such a scenario, the Wehrmacht would be forced to stop in front of the line of the Western Dvina. It will take at least two weeks, but rather a month, to force this defensive position. During this time, the next line of resistance will be prepared. The gain in

time and effort can be spent on the joint efforts of the Baltic Fleet, the Leningrad Military District and the aviation reserve of the Supreme High Command to quickly withdraw Finland from the war (or at least inflict a significant defeat on it, break through into the interior of the country, capture Helsinki, neutralize Finnish fleet and deploy aviation in central Finland, creating a flank threat for the German army "Norway"). Note that both in the Anisimov-Zvyagintsev version and in our scenario, the Soviet

troops do not require special feats, and the Red Army command does not require insight and military talent. In essence, we are talking, oddly enough, only about the fulfillment of statutory requirements and elementary, student, observance of the basic rules and provisions of the theoretical strategy. And from this point of view, the "alternatives" of 1941, in which the operational balance is shifted in favor of the USSR, are obvious and, therefore, "not interesting"¹ .

-2- Much more imagination and resourcefulness requires the search for Alternative Realities that are beneficial to the Reich. First of all, neither "strict

fulfillment of the Statutes", nor adherence to the laws of strategy does not save Germany. Of course, if we start See
¹the appendix, diagram 3.

178

build a version in which A. Hitler is helped by the same incredible luck as in the real 1941, and at the same time the German military leaders do not make gross mistakes with Kiev, Smolensk and Tallinn, the OKH does not lose a month and a half of operational time to discuss the prospects for the second stage of the campaign, the German occupation authorities are making efforts not to destroy commissars, Jews, gypsies and other "subhumans", but to establish elementary interaction with the population and organize an economic organism in the occupied Soviet territories, while the rear military authorities provide at least somewhat tolerable conditions life for captured Soviet soldiers and officers. If, at the same time, the Soviet command also repeats all the mistakes they made in the summer and autumn campaigns in the Current Reality, then in this version it is possible to win the war for Germany even within the framework of Barbarossa. But such a "one-sided game" generates Reality with very low certainty. Such a Reality is also obvious and "not interesting".

Of course, no one forced von Bock to waste all the pace he won in the first stage of the Moscow battle from scratch. A strong, domineering, self-confident commander would have extinguished the smoldering conflict between Kluge and Guderian, forced the 4th Field Army to close its flanks with the 2nd Panzer Group and make every possible and impossible effort to capture Tula. In the north, von Bock could achieve a minimal "understanding" on the part of von Leeb, that is, the development of operations of the 16th Army in the direction of Kalinin. (There is no doubt that in the Current Reality, the commander of the Army Group "Center" did not give a damn about securing his left flank, limiting himself to the first "no" from von Leeb; the higher authorities generally withdrew from solving the problem of interaction between army groups.) Under these conditions it was possible to risk throwing the 4th Panzer Group forward - directly to Moscow. And here is the question of luck. If Gepner's tanks had approached Moscow on October 16, the day when panic reigned in Moscow and the uncontrolled evacuation of Soviet institutions began (not a day earlier and not a day later!), It is very likely that the 4th Panzer Group would have captured Moscow, like to how the 2nd took possession of the Eagle without a fight. The chances of such a development of events are not so small - about twenty percent. 179

The war would not have ended there, but the position of the Soviet troops in the central sector of the front would have become very difficult. The Germans capture the Moscow concrete airfields, take possession of the central transport hub of Russia. Army Group Center is gaining all the advantages of operations along internal lines, which will allow the crisis in the Kalinin region to be resolved in its favor and will facilitate the advance of the 2nd Panzer Group to the east. Nevertheless, the natural development of events in this version also leads to the establishment of a positional front. But - in the Moscow area. This local "alternative" is considered in N. Perumov's story "Iron

from the Blood". Probably, in the same military logic, events unfold in the novel by A. Lazarchuk "Everyone Capable of Holding Weapons" (in an abbreviated version - "Another Sky"), where after the capture of Moscow, the 2nd Panzer Group advances on Kotlas. The war ends with the inclusion of European Russia in the Reich, Siberia remains an independent Russian state and eventually everything starts to play

important role in world affairs .

James Lucas in his "Operation Wotan"² also replays the battle of Moscow, and he does it with epic scope. A group of tank armies is being created, uniting all four tank groups of the Eastern Front. The commander of this unguided armada (over 4,000 tanks in 17 panzer divisions, 13 motorized divisions, the Leibstandarte plus at least 12 infantry divisions) is General Luftwaffe Kesselring. Supply the Kesselring group during the offensive

¹ "Alternatives" by F. Dick "The King in the High Castle" and A. Bester "The Entangled Wires" do not consider the military aspects of the Russian campaign. Harris in Vatherland talks about how the Reich wins the war in detail, but it is not at all believable. However, it makes sense to postpone the analysis of his version until the consideration of the Stalingrad operation of the Wehrmacht.

² Collection of "alternative versions of the Second World War", edited by K. Maxi. Published in the Russian Federation under the title "Hitler's Other Possibilities" (ACT, Terra fantastica, 2001). The head of "Operation Wotan" belongs to James Lucas, Secretary of the British Section of the European Confederation of Ancient Battles.

180

lags through the air, involving for this purpose the entire transport aviation of the Reich, not excluding the semi-experimental aircraft "Me 321A-1", "Go-42" and "Ju-322".

Further, J. Lucas parallels (carries out simultaneously) the Leningrad, Vyazemsky, Bryansk and Kyiv operations, which requires the 2nd and 4th tank groups to at least "split up". But this is not enough for the author. He also assumes that all four tank groups can be assembled under the leadership of Kesselring on September 28 (although Lucas admits that "some formations will come later and make up the second echelon of the tank army group" - consider that they will finally clog all the roads along which food is supplied operations; however, I forgot that to supply food, fuel and ammunition to 42 divisions, of which 30 are tank and motorized, 1,000 aircraft of the German transport aviation are required).

The offensive is carried out bypassing Moscow from the south: a group of tank armies is deployed along the front from Tula to Kursk and advances through Orel and Voronezh to Gorky. Moving off-road - for all the roads in this area are oriented to the Moscow transport hub - 200 kilometers a day in dry weather and 20 kilometers during the slush, overcoming the "template attacks of the Russians", Kesselring's troops reach the Volga by the end of October, ten days they take possession of the entire Volga industrial region (now it is "the supporting frame of Russia, consisting of nine million-plus cities, but even in 1941 the Germans had to face continuous urban development, convenient for defense) and turn to Moscow in order to take it from the east. This is followed by an uprising in Russia and the coming to power of a "military junta" headed for some reason by General Vlasov¹ (in the text he is called the commander of the 12th Russian army operating near Moscow; in fact, the 12th army fought in the Donbass, and Vlasov never I didn't command her - well, that's right, by the way ...).

¹ I will not deny myself the pleasure of quoting from the novel by A. Lazarchuk and M. Uspensky "Look into the eyes of monsters": "- How do you feel about General Vlasov? — And who is this? —

I was surprised."

181

And the apotheosis: *"Our and two other battalions were ordered to leave the armored personnel carriers and sit in passenger cars. We were accompanied by Russian officers, many with tsarist cockades... A few hours later we reached the Moscow western railway station and marched to the city center. Parts of Bock's army group were already here, and on Red Square an SS detachment blew up Lenin's grave. At dusk, many searchlights illuminated the flagpole over the Kremlin, and we, touched to the depths of our souls, saw the German military standard fluttering on top of it ..."* Of course, one cannot take such an "alternative" seriously. account for

agree with the opinion of the commentator V. Goncharov, who continues the operation "Wotan" with a completely natural counterattack of the Soviet troops against the flanks of the advancing German grouping. "It seems that the outcome of this offensive is absolutely clear. The conditions for it can be considered ideal - the Germans climbed into such a "bag", which any enemy commander sees only in sweet dreams. Based on the pace of a real offensive in December 1941, then both strike groups will meet each other no later than in two weeks, and most likely in one. This will happen just to the west of Efremov and Yelets - just in the area where the headquarters of the commander of the tank army group is located.

Snow, charred walls of houses painted white, Russian "thirty-fours", submachine gunners in white coats - and the stooped figure of a German general with his hands up. Mr. Kesselring, well, you can't be so careless! ..

There will be no throw from Gorky through Vladimir to Moscow - instead, a group of tank armies will turn back, trying to break back to the west. But it will still be necessary to reach these barriers - off-road, without winter clothes, with a catastrophic shortage of fuel and ammunition. Huge distances will play a much greater role than the weak barriers of the Soviet troops, stunned by unprecedented success and have not yet learned how to really build an inner encirclement. 182

Ten years later, in his book "Memoirs of a Soldier", Heinz Guderian will devote many heartfelt words to Hitler's criminal dilettantism, despite the pleas of experienced generals, who threw the flower of the German army into this senseless raid, to certain death in the snowy Murom forests ... "1

-3- In the 1990s, I took part in two big strategic war games based on World War II. The "branching point" in both cases was April 1941, that is, it was assumed that Operation Marita had already been carried out, but the decision to land on the island of Crete had not yet been made. Both games were won by the German side, and the strategy chosen by the winners, in my opinion, is worthy of study. In both versions of the war, the Germans abandon

the "OKH war" concept. The campaign against the USSR is regarded as a risky and dangerous undertaking, requiring the exertion of all the forces of the Reich and the participation of all branches of the armed forces. This means building a complex operation that includes military operations against England in the general context of the war in the East (and not vice versa, as it was in the Current Reality). In the 1993 Game, the

Germans struck the first blow in the Mediterranean Sea, capturing Cyprus and creating jump airfields there. Based on Cyprus, they went on the offensive in Egypt and managed to transfer some, initially, rather symbolic, forces to Iraq, where the anti-British uprising of Rashid Ali Geylani began. (It also happened in the Current Reality, but the Germans were not able to take advantage of its fruits there.) Having created the "shuttle" Cyprus - Western Desert, the Luftwaffe squadrons continuously bombed Alexandria. As a result, by mid-May 1941, the stability of the British defense in Egypt was broken. The conditions favored the achievement of an "understanding" with the Vichy government, as a result of which the German army group See Appendix, Diagram 4.

1

"Mediterranean" received bases in Syria. In the future, this army group will be deployed against the Soviet Transcaucasus, and its communication lines

partially reoriented to Abadan.

The plan "Barbarossa" has undergone a complete redesign and in the new edition has received the name "Hammer of the Witches". The main blow was delivered by Army Group "South" through the territory of Moldova with the crossing of the Dniester and access to the deep rear of the armies of the Soviet South-Western Front. Auxiliary strikes were focused on Sarny and Odessa-Nikolaev. Army Group Center deployed from Brest to East Prussia (that is, it occupied a strip that was divided between von Bock and von Leeb in the Current Reality). The task of this army group was to divert the maximum enemy forces to itself, which was supposed to be achieved by an offensive that was carried out in approximately the same configuration as in the implementation of the Barbarossa plan, but with smaller mobile forces. Army Group North concentrated in Finland and Norway, having the task of demonstrating an offensive against Leningrad and taking Murmansk at any cost, or at least cutting off the Murmansk railway (this task was carried out by an airborne assault on Medvezhyegorsk).

The beginning of the operation was moved to May 19 (not least due to the fact that the 1st Panzer Group was transported to the Jassy region, and not to Lublin). The organization of the interaction of shock groups was facilitated by the general concentric movement of German troops, not excluding the Mediterranean Army Group. The problem of the junction of army groups "South" and "Center" in the area of the Pripyat swamps was resolved at the first stage by the slow advance of von Bock's armies in Belarus, at the second - by the improvised 5th Panzer Group (created from the 2nd Panzer Division of the OKH reserve, some parts of 2 th Panzer Group and security divisions subordinate to von Rundstedt).

It is interesting that in this operation, too, a rather severe crisis was observed, associated with a shortage of troops for the second stage of operations and the resulting tendency towards positionalism. The Germans managed to solve their problems largely due to air superiority and very successful actions in the Transcaucasus. 184

-4-

The game of 1998 is described in detail in the article "Operation Schlieffen", published in the same collection "Hitler's Other Possibilities" as the work of J. Lucas (cited in strong abbreviation). "The logic of the war plan was set out in a memorandum drawn up in the winter 1941 by E. Manstein:

"Achieving the strategic goal of the campaign - the defeat of the Soviet Union and its withdrawal from the war as a military and economic (ideally - and political) force - is hampered, first of all, by the size of the Russian territory.

There are four possible plans of action for the Russians to be reckoned with. 1. Preventive war with an offensive: a) on Bucharest-Ploiesti; b) to Lublin, then to Budapest-Vienna with a turn to Bucharest-Ploiesti, or to Berlin; c) to Warsaw with a turn to Koenigsberg or to Danzig; d) to Warsaw with further movement to Lodz and Berlin; e) an offensive against Finland (perhaps in coordination with the British acting against Northern Norway). Advances could be supported by air and sea (previously

in total, on the Black Sea: in Romania, Bulgaria or Turkey) by landings.

2. Defense along the line of "old fortified areas".

3. Defense along the Western Dvina-Dnepr line. 4.

Deep retreat to the line of industrial areas: Leningrad,

Moscow, Kharkov, Rostov-on-Don.

The strategic plan must ensure the unconditional and rapid defeat of the enemy, regardless of which plan he chooses. This implies a deep detour maneuver with access to the rear of the "line of industrial regions."

Since there are not enough forces for a double envelopment, the only option left is an asymmetric "Shliffen offensive". The desirability of coordinating the actions of the army and navy in the operation leads to the choice of the left (northern) flank as a strike.

185

Thus, the main blow should be struck in the Baltics. The North Army Group operating there (with the support of the Center Army Group covering its right flank) must defeat the enemy troops in the North-West, capture Riga and Dvinsk, come into contact with Finnish troops in the Novgorod region and then launch an offensive against Yaroslavl, Kazan, Gorky, bypassing Moscow from the east. Such a plan promises quick and complete success, however:

1. The strike from Finland to Leningrad and further to

Novgorod is not provided with sufficient forces and means, which can lead to the connection of the Allied forces in the Mga region and the loss of operational time. 2.

Army Group North is faced with the task of overcoming the

defensive line of the Western Dvina in the lower reaches, which can also lead to serious delays.

3. And most importantly - to deploy in East Prussia the number of troops required for Operation Schlieffen was not possible.

Based on this, it is proposed to deploy on the territory of the enemy - during the Saaremaa, Pärnus and Riga landing operations (...). The Fuhrer's preliminary directive for

the Alternative plan was issued simultaneously with the start of the Yugoslav campaign. This meant that the responsible executors had only a few weeks to complete the colossal amount of planned activities: "I decided immediately after the completion of the operation in the Balkans to launch the Hyperion, Sea

Lion and Blau offensives. The purpose of the Hyperion deployment is to further assist the Italian ally, as well as divert the attention

of England and Russia to the Mediterranean region. A "continuous operation" is envisaged against Malta and Tobruk, with development towards Alexandria and Suez. The command on the ground must understand that during the spring-summer of 1941, the enemy reserves located in North Africa, the Islands and the Middle East must be pinned down at any cost until the very existence of the expeditionary corps. 186

General coordination of the actions of the armed forces of the "Axis" in the Mediterranean Sea assigned to Reichsmarschall Goering.

The purpose of the deployment of "Sea Lion" is the strategic misinformation of the Red Army command. I alone am responsible for a decision bordering on insanity: to land the troops of Army Group West on the English coast, despite the fact that practically all the aviation and most of the Reich fleet, including landing craft, will be in the following days are involved in the East. For a month or two, Field Marshal List's troops will have to rely only on themselves and hold a bridgehead with insufficient supplies and in conditions of probable superiority

enemy in the air. If any army in the world can do this, then only the army of Greater Germany. The purpose of the Blau

offensive is to deploy troops of the special Landing Army Group in Latvia and Estonia, capture bridges across the Western Dvina, unite units and formations advancing from the Baltic bridgeheads with the corps of Army Group North, further advance towards Pskov and Novgorod, establish interaction with the troops of the German-Finnish Army Group "Finland" and, ultimately, the occupation of an advantageous operational position for the subsequent implementation of the Schlieffen plan. The Supreme High Command reserves the decision on the Schlieffen entry into

force of the directive Organizationally, the directive "Alternative" provided for the the army group "West" and allocation of

troops in Germany, a special Landing Army Group, based on Königsberg, Danzig, Kiel. The troops of this army group, with the support of the main forces of the German Ocean Fleet, a separate air fleet and airborne troops, were to take possession of the islands of the Moonsund archipelago and the region of the city of Riga. (Operations in Estonia were assigned a supporting role.) Thus, the Landing Army Group deployed on enemy territory, capturing the operational centers of the position (Riga and Saaremaa) and breaking

through the defense line along the Western Dvina on the very first day of the operation.

The grouping of troops on the Karelian Isthmus was strengthened by the 18th German Army, transported from Germany.

187

It was believed that the Landing Army Group would enter into interaction with the Army Group "North" in the Siauliai region. During the general offensive of the northern wing, German troops will meet with the Finns in the areas of Narva, Luga, Novgorod.

In the future, it was supposed to advance within the framework of the original idea of the Schlieffen plan - to Rybinsk and Yaroslavl, bypassing Moscow from the northeast; the Finnish army covered the operation by advancing in the direction of Arkhangelsk.

The interaction of the troops of the left wing (army groups "Finland", "Airborne", "North") was ensured by the subordination of their common chief - the commander of the Northern Operational Direction. The Army Group

"Center" was entrusted with the task of covering the southern flank of the SON, which was recommended to be achieved by an offensive in the direction of Minsk, Vitebsk.

Army Group "South" carried out an independent Schlieffen maneuver on the right-bank Ukraine. At the second stage of the offensive, this army group was to launch an offensive against Kursk-Voronezh, covering itself from the south with Romanian and Hungarian troops.

The Führer objected strongly to the widespread assertion that the "Alternative" plan was unparalleled in military history. In an interview with the Soviet magazine Novy Mir, he stated, in particular: "The main idea was directly and directly taken from Napoleon. The Grand Army, having riveted the attention of the enemy to the Boulogne camp, rushed to the territory of Germany with a forced march, where it turned from marching formation into combat, encircling Mack's vanguard army in Ulm. No one in the General Staff believed that it would be possible to hide the preparations for war in the East from Stalin. Therefore, the "Sea Lion" was needed - if anything could convince the Russian command that we were stuck in the West for a long time, then only a real landing on English territory. After it, all the warnings of undercover and

combined-arms intelligence regarding "Blau", "Alternative" and "Schlieffen" were perceived as obvious disinformation. They write that the Russians *"could not detect the German landing fleet in the Baltic."* Of course, it was discovered, and more than once. Couldn't believe..."

On April 30, 1941, the Axis forces in Europe were deployed as follows:

188

1. Southern Operational Direction (area of responsibility "Hyperion").

General leadership is carried out by the Reichsmarschall of Aviation G. Goering. The direction includes the Italo-German Army Group "Mediterranean" under the command of Colonel General E. Rommel (African Corps, Airborne Corps, Italian African Army, 51st Corps from the 2nd Army, 18th Mountain Corps from the 12th Army), the Italian Navy, aviation formations. (German troops involved: 2 airborne, 2 mountain, 2 infantry, 1 tank and 1 motorized division.)

2. Western Operational Direction (Sea Lion area of responsibility). General

leadership and tactical command of Army Group West (1st, 7th, 15th Armies, Normandy Panzer Group: 24 infantry, 2 tank, 1 motorized divisions) is carried out by Field Marshal V. List.

3. Eastern Operational Direction (zone of responsibility "Pripyat"). General leadership and tactical command of Army Group South carried out by Field Marshal K. Rundstedt.

Army Group South (K. Rundstedt): 17th Army (5 infantry, 3 light, 2 mountain rifle, 2 security divisions), 11th Army (11 infantry divisions), 1st Panzer Group (8 infantry, 3 armored, 3 motorized divisions), the Romanian army, the Hungarian corps.

Army Group Center (F. Bock): 4th Army (12 infantry divisions), 12th Army (12 infantry divisions), 3rd Panzer Group (4 infantry, 2 tank, 3 motorized divisions), 4 divisions direct subordination.

In total, German troops were involved: 52 infantry, 3 light, 3 mountain, 6 4 security, 4 tank , motorized divisions. 4.

Northern Operational Direction (area of responsibility "Alternative"). Army Group "Finland" (W.

Leeb): 18th German Army (6 infantry divisions), Norwegian mountain corps (2 mountain divisions), 61 corps, Finnish army. Airborne Army Group: 8th Army (4 infantry

divisions), 3rd Army (12 infantry, 2 tank, 1 motorized divisions), 6th Army (4 infantry, 1 tank division).

189

Army Group North (G. Kluge): 16th Army (12 rifle divisions), 9th Army (9 infantry divisions, 3 security divisions), 2nd Army (12 rifle divisions), 2nd tank group (4 tank, 3 motorized divisions), 4th tank group (4 tank, 3 motorized divisions).

In total, German troops were involved: 64 infantry, 2 mountain, 9 tank, 5 motorized divisions.

Thus, the German command attracted 139 infantry, 3 light, 6 mountain, 9 security, 2 airborne, 19 tank, 15 motorized divisions to deliver the main attack. Practically, this was all that was at the disposal of Germany, including internal, security and occupation troops, rear services. These sources differ as to which part of the listed divisions and corps existed

mainly on paper: in the first half of 1941, the OKH formed 58 divisional, 16 corps and 4 army headquarters, all of which were included in the operational schedule (and, accordingly, were included in the list above). As V. Brauchitsch noted: "... often the balancing was maintained not in the real, but in the information space - where there were not enough troops, rumors were spread about their presence and higher headquarters were created, imitating the combat work of divisional formations; camouflage painted Volkswagens were used instead of tanks; the role of the missing destroyers and light cruisers was successfully fulfilled by scows, boats, seiners, longboats and other floating trifles, which played the famous "Waltz of Reflections" in the North Sea. The war consisted of two stages. On the first, German troops, taking advantage of surprise (in the game, the enemy's attention was completely

drawn to England and the Mediterranean Sea, in real life, the beginning of the battle for the British Isles, of course, would convince any Soviet command that there would be no war this summer), capture 11— May 12, 1941 st Time was won, firstly, through the use of the Turkish railway (a matter of political will and the magnitude of the "baksheesh" of responsible Turkish officials) and, secondly, with

¹

using modern logistics methods. 190

ditch of the Moosund archipelago, Riga and bridges over the Daugava, Tartu, Pärnu. Then the German troops in the north form a united front, going from Lake Ladoga to Novgorod and Velikie Luki - further to Smolensk and the Dnieper. At the second stage, the Valdai region is captured and from there two tank armies are sent to bypass Moscow from the northeast - with access to Yaroslavl, then - to Kazan; Army Group "South" goes to the lower reaches of the Don and the Voronezh River, marking the offensive to the middle Volga. The resulting operational configuration deprives the Soviet Union of the opportunity to effectively continue the war, therefore, the question of a decent and acceptable peace for both sides can be raised. Both games, although they ended with the success of

Germany, showed how difficult the task set before the performers of Barbarossa really was. Even with the real tension of all the forces of the Reich, with an ideal strategic plan that takes into account all the real capabilities of the enemy and Neutralizes his counterplay, when involving the forces of the fleet (including the Bismarck, which, of course, neither in the 1994 game, nor in the 1998 game of the year in cruising on the eve of the war with Russia was not sent), using dangerous and potent means to ensure surprise, the war was won only due to the mistakes of the enemy. Note that in both games, the main of these mistakes was the stubborn desire to

the Soviet command to act actively - within the framework of the ideas of V. Suvorov.

¹ See appendix, scheme 5.

Part 3

Clash of Empires

The first plot: "You are in my hands, Africa!"

Between December 6 and 8, 1941, the character of events changed decisively. Soviet troops launched a counteroffensive near Moscow; on the strategic flanks of the Eastern Front, they also, by and large, owned the initiative. This meant that for Germany the question was: how to win the world war? changed

question: how not to lose it? Japan entered the conflict, attacking Pearl Harbor, the Philippines and Malaysia. The Congress of the United States of America was almost unanimously in favor of declaring war on the Land of the Rising Sun. The next day, A. Hitler, "fulfilling allied obligations," declared that the Reich was at war with the United States. It was one of the most

unexpected decisions of the Fuhrer. Sometimes it is

explained by A. Hitler's hope that Japan, in turn, will attack the Soviet Far East, which will make it difficult to transfer Siberian divisions to the Eastern Front. But the Japanese ambassador informed the leadership of the Reich about the terms of the Soviet-Japanese treaty. It was quite clear that the Empire of the Rising Sun, having secured its rear in Manchuria and having decided - after and as a result of this - on an prohibitively risky war in the South Pacific, would under no circumstances attack the USSR. In addition, the available Japanese forces were not physically capable of waging war simultaneously with China (it had been going on with short breaks since the mid-1930s), the United States, Great Britain and the USSR.

However, if A. Hitler had any illusions about the behavior of the allies along the Axis, then, one must think, the actions of B. Mussolini in the autumn of 1939 contributed to dispelling them.

192

It is often said that Hitler's act was purely formal: the United States would have declared war on Germany sooner or later anyway. This is true, of course, but the whole question is "early" or "late"? Isolationism in the States was very strong, the unanimity of the deputies of Congress was enough for exactly one day. The wars in Europe and the Pacific were viewed by them as completely unrelated (in December 1941 they were in fact unrelated). The need to fight Japan was not in doubt. As for Germany, Stalin's Soviet Union was not much more popular in America than Hitler's Germany, and Great Britain was seen in influential circles in Washington as a competitor, not as an ally. F. Roosevelt would have had to make considerable efforts to induce congressmen to draw the country, already at war in the Pacific, into European affairs. Declaring war on the United States on December 8, 1941, A. Hitler undoubtedly contributed to the efforts of F. Roosevelt. Of course, A. Hitler's step can be seen as a form of political "PR". Look: Germany, wrestling not for life, but for

death with one great power, which is at war with another, itself declares war on a third. Looks impressive, but essentially meaningless.

The most unusual version is offered by the German historian S. Haffner¹. In his opinion, A. Hitler already on December 6, 1941, that is, on the day when the Soviet counter-offensive near Moscow began, realized that he overestimated the possibilities of the Reich and that the war with Russia was lost. On the other hand, it was clear that Great Britain was drained of blood. Her remaining strength was only enough for defense. Probably, in the future they would be quite enough for an offensive against Italy. But not for a serious fight in Europe.

And this meant that Germany would be defeated and occupied by the Soviet Union. Hitler, who signed the Ost Plan, the Darkness and Fog directive (part of which was the well-known Commissar Order) and the order On Special Jurisdiction in the Barbarossa Region, expected more from S.

¹ Haffner . "Suicide of the German Empire:

193

whist hordes" retaliatory cruelty. The only hope was the possibility of getting something for Germany, playing on the contradictions between the allies. But

then the Reich had to ensure a balance of power, to find a counterbalance to the Soviet Union. And a unique act in military history arose: a declaration of war, as a call for help.

A beautiful version, although probably too complicated for the political "circus". However, A. Hitler could not calculate all these subtleties and balances of power, but make an unexpected move, simply trusting his excellent intuition. Be that as it may, the

Fuhrer's decision tied two wars into a single world crisis, until then different in design, design, logic, tools, theaters of operations and actors of influence. After December 8, 1941, all five great empires fought among themselves, forming the geopolitical map of their time. Germany and Japan attacked Great Britain, the Soviet Union and the United States of America. In 1942, hostilities swept the whole world. A completely different war. The

strategic position of the Soviet Union was perhaps the simplest. The first

onslaught of the Germans was repulsed, the industry completed its deployment (in the Urals beyond the reach of enemy aircraft) and increased the production of military equipment. Under these conditions, the USSR had a clear prospect of a military victory. The possibilities of political use of this victory were determined mainly by how fast and comprehensive it would be. Britain faced intractable military and political problems. The metropolis was still expecting an invasion. The empire is attacked in

the Far East and the Mediterranean, the uprising in the Middle East is suppressed with difficulty and not completely. Gandhi's influence grew in India. In such an environment, it is difficult to propose any positive strategy. Great Britain had no doubt that at the end of the war she would be in the camp of the victors, but rightly feared to be there as a junior partner. It remained to hope for an unexpected and resounding victory, but the country's leadership had no idea where and how this victory would be won.

194

The United States has just begun to deploy its forces. They also did not know where and how decisive victories would be won, but they did not doubt the victories themselves, despite the complete loss of initiative and the completely unexpected loss of control over the Pacific Ocean. The American strategic concept is simple: to maintain a balance between Europe and the Asia-Pacific region so that the wars in the West and in the East end simultaneously and, moreover, not before American forces enter the war with decisive effect in both theaters of war. Japan was not going to participate in a total world war and did not have the

strength to do so. Its strategic line was to exchange the results achieved by the spring of 1942 (Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia) for a world that would be better than the pre-war one in at least one respect - in relation to providing Japan with oil.

Finally, Germany. The defeat on the Eastern Front is very difficult, but, according to the top leadership of the Reich, it is not yet fatal. The Soviet Union is no less drained by previous battles and losses, so that the chances of a total victory in the East still remain. The Americans will be able to deploy forces in Europe only in two or three years, if they can at all manage to create an impressive land army and move it across the ocean. During this time, it is necessary to withdraw the Soviet Union or Great Britain from the war. Maybe both?

If this fails, it is necessary, at least, to hold out until the arrival of the Americans and a quarrel between the allies, and A. Hitler was absolutely sure that such a quarrel would happen. Actually, the Fuhrer was not mistaken in this, although this did not help either the Reich or him personally.

In the circumstances that have arisen, it is necessary to stabilize the situation on the Eastern Front, bearing in mind the spring transition to the offensive, although in December 1941 it was not possible to answer the question: where, with what forces and with what goals would the Wehrmacht be able to attack again? There are not enough armies at the front, and those that are have lost their mobility. This means that instead of a blitzkrieg, a protracted coalition war will have to be waged. Therefore, it is vital to demand from the Romanians and Hungarians

195

ing their military contingents in Russia, it is necessary to convince B. Mussolini to send Italian infantry to the Eastern Front. And for this, it will be necessary to maximally intensify the actions of the German "African Corps" in Cyrenaica. A landing in England is obviously

no longer possible, but almost the entire coast of France is at the disposal of the German fleet. In World War I, admirals could only dream of such ideal starting conditions for submarine warfare. True, there are not enough submarines ... After the counter-offensive of the Soviet troops near Moscow, the German

grand strategy was built on a compromise between the desired and the possible. In 1942, instead of a linear and clear "OKW" war, Germany will be waging a much more complex and multifactorial "OKW war" in Russia, Norway, the Atlantic Ocean, the Mediterranean Sea and Africa.

-1

- The fighting in North Africa will forever remain associated with the name of Erwin Rommel, the best tank commander of World War II. For two years, Rommel, with marvelous art using his completely inadequate forces, challenged the dominance of the allies in Libya and even threatened Egypt and the countries of the Middle East.

The OKH has always treated the war in Africa as a purely political event associated with the need to provide assistance to the Italian ally (in 1942, B. Mussolini will have to pay for this assistance with an entire army, which will be sent to the Russian front, where it will die almost entirely in winter). Accordingly, Halder considered every battalion sent to Africa as lost to the war with Russia. In fact, the OKW did not take this theater of war seriously enough either. It took the Germans more than six

months to at least outline their goals in the Mediterranean. It is clear that the conquest for Mussolini of the "African empire" consisting of Libya, Egypt,

196

Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia (and at the same time Aden) were not included in the list of priority tasks of the German command. But the capture of Suez by 8,000 miles lengthened the path of English ships from India to the British Isles, which was equivalent to reducing the tonnage used by the Allies by several times. Neither in the Second World War, nor even in the First German submarines could even dream of such a result.

The second prize was oil. In 1941, the Middle East had not yet acquired the importance it would play in military conflicts in the second half of the 20th century. Nevertheless, 11 million tons of oil were produced annually in Iraq and in Iranian Abadan. The wells of Ploiesti gave about the same amount, but the Reich had to share their products for the time being with

Italians. Britain would survive the loss of Iraqi oil, but Germany's economic situation would improve markedly. Most importantly, a new line of communication was emerging to power operations in the Middle East and, if necessary, in India or the Transcaucasus.

Finally, strengthening the position of the Axis in the Levant would help to maintain control of the Vichy government over Syria and Algeria. The problems of Marshal Pétain themselves hardly worried the leadership of the Reich, but the popular General de Gaulle, who became the leader of the Free French and received the direct support of Great Britain, "slowly and methodically" took under his hand (that is, handed over to Sir Winston) French overseas territories. Since Germany's relations with the Vichy government were developing quite well, it was a question of who would control the French colonial empire. If we add Italian claims, Japanese designs and Reich protectorates to the Vichy dominions, a territory comparable to the British colonial or American neo-colonial empires of their heyday looms. This, of course, is not world domination, but a significant step in it and an almost certain victory in the world war (in which, let me remind you, neither the USSR nor the USA participate in the end of 1940 - the beginning of 1941). And the key position, the capture of which guarantees further acquisitions, turns out to be Egypt - Alexandria and Suez.

197

For the leadership of the OKH, accustomed in the post-Versailles years to count money and divisions, such reflections lie beyond the boundaries of rational thinking - in the realm of fantasies, chimeras and emotions. OKW and A. Hitler himself looked at the world more broadly. But perhaps that is why they were very wary of B. Mussolini's African adventure and were completely unprepared to deploy significant German forces in the Mediterranean theater. Unlike many historians who reproach A. Hitler for "not

understanding the significance of Egypt as the most important link in the British Empire and the "key" to both the Near and Middle East", the Fuhrer of the German nation undoubtedly remembered the fate of the Egyptian campaign of Napoleon Bonaparte .

The Egyptian operation of 1798-1799 was not planned by the Directory. It was Napoleon who prepared it, the campaign in the East was his favorite enterprise. Bourrienne conveys the words of Napoleon: "Europe is a wormhole! There have never been such great possessions and great revolutions as in the East, where 600 million people live. Napoleon

exemplary conducted the war. Egypt was conquered, Bonaparte's army invaded Syria and failed to take the small but key (it turns out there can be many "keys") fortress of Saint-Jean d'Acre, which continuously received reinforcements and military equipment by sea.

It immediately turned out that the position of the victorious army was tragic, and the only thing left for Napoleon was to abandon his troops in Egypt and, calling a spade a spade, flee to France, giving the "honor" of surrender to Kléber. The Egyptian campaign of Bonaparte

proved that the conquest of the East has as its indispensable condition the conquest of unconditional dominance in the Mediterranean. Moreover, taking into account the length of communication lines, this condition was necessary, but not sufficient.

It was necessary to take into account the low combat capability of the Italian troops. (Before the war, A. Hitler could have had illusions that the fascist regime had changed the character of the Italian soldier for the better, but the very first clashes between the Italians and the French put everything in its place.) This meant that the situation in

East Africa is far from

198

solid, or rather, it is solid until the British seriously deal with this issue.

In addition, the excessively active actions of the Germans in Africa and the Middle East could lead to an increase in tension between the Axis allies, and at the beginning of 1941 Italy was still considered by A. Hitler as a significant military and political force (note that in 1914 the refusal Italy to fulfill its obligations to the Triple Alliance was one of the decisive factors that ensured the final victory of the Entente).

Gradually, however, it becomes clear that Italy does not want or cannot fight for the Mediterranean and North Africa. After Taranto, the 10th Air Corps had to be sent to Sicily. After the collapse of the Italian offensive in Greece, the OKW (this time in close contact with the OKH) began to develop Operation Marita. On February 6, 1941, when Graziani's army was finally defeated and the British captured Benghazi, a corps consisting of the 5th motorized and 15th tank divisions was allocated for operations in North Africa. True, these divisions still needed to be somehow transferred to Libya.

There is every reason to believe that the OKH sent a "general who is not sorry" to the commander in Africa. At the beginning of 1941, E. Rommel was not yet *Rommel*, the "desert fox" and the best tactician of World War II. He fought bravely during the First World War, like almost all the officers of the Reich. During the French campaign, E. Rommel commanded the 7th Panzer Division well, attracted the attention of the leadership and journalists, but, of course, his achievements were not as impressive as those of the same E. Manstein or Balck, not to mention the elite armored troops of Great Germany - Guderians, Gotha, von Kleist. It would seem that independent command in a separate - and very important - theater of operations, in a theater that, moreover, involves the widest use of mobile units, should have been handed over to one of these honored generals. And with marshals and dukes, traditionally commanders of Italian troops, honored military leaders, victors of Poland and France, it would be much easier to communicate than a little-known yesterday's division commander.

199

It must be assumed that at the beginning of February the OKW had not yet resolved the question of whether anything would be sent to Africa at all, except for an unknown general, and a few symbolic battalions (with the promise to someday make a division or even a whole corps out of them).

-2-

Rommel flew to Tripoli on February 12, 1941. Two days later, a German transport delivered a reconnaissance battalion and an anti-tank division there. Having given these "forces" "tanks" made from Volkswagen cars (of which there were plenty in Africa), Rommel sends his "corps" to the front, which immediately stops the British advance. March 11, when the first combat-ready unit arrives - a tank regiment of the 5th motorized division, the commander of the African corps decides to go on the offensive. It took time to prepare it, but as it turned out, the delay only increased the Germans' chances of

success. The British came to the conclusion that the battle was over, as a result of which the commander of the army "Nile" O'Connor was granted leave. The 7th armored division, which played a major role in the completed operation, was taken to rest in Egypt, its place was taken by the 2nd armored division, which had no combat experience. The Australian veterans were transferred to Greece, replaced by the understrength 9th Infantry Division. AND,

most importantly, no one in the British army expected active action from the German-Italian coalition.

On April 2, Rommel launched 50 tanks (all he had) and two fresh Italian divisions into the attack. Nim, the commander of the English army in the absence of O'Connor, became confused and lost control of the troops. In the end, he decided that Rommel's two detachments, operating in isolation from each other, were two strong groups carrying out an enveloping maneuver. On this occasion, he left

Benghazi on 3 April. O'Connor urgently returned from vacation, but already on April 6, the car with both British commanders was captured by German units¹. As the retreat one english

200

The first division loses all its tanks, the second one is surrounded. Volkswagens and trucks kick up clouds of dust, Messerschmites obstruct all observation from the air, with the result that the division commander, confident that he is cut off by vastly superior forces, capitulates to two incomplete battalions. By April 11, there were no British left in Libya, only the Tobruk fortress on the Mediterranean coast held. In two weeks, Rommel walked 500 kilometers, but W. Churchill ordered Tobruk to be held at any cost and under any circumstances. The history of the fortress of Saint-Jean d'Acre began to repeat itself.

-3- Rommel could not leave Tobruk to his fate. The British retained dominance in the Mediterranean and could supply the fortress for as long as they liked. They could also transfer to Tobruk - in addition to the 9th division, the 18th brigade and fifty tanks - a couple more higher formations. This meant that Tobruk was becoming a vague flanking threat; as it advanced into Egypt, the fortress would more and more clearly control the communication lines of the Italo-German troops oriented towards Tripoli.

But attacking Tobruk, Rommel immediately lost the advantage in mobility. Meanwhile, the forces concentrated in the fortress outnumbered the entire "African Corps", while the "Nile" army remained on the border of Libya and Egypt. Rommel nevertheless tried to strike, but was not successful, in addition, he lost 16 of the 38 tanks remaining with him. While (from April 11 to 16) all these events were taking place, the Italian command in North Africa turned to Rome with a complaint against the German ally. Rome, in turn, complained about Rommel to Berlin, resulting in

¹ In the conditions of fighting in Africa, the combat formations of the parties were mixed, forming a "layer cake". This often led to the fact that headquarters and top commanders fell under attack or even ended up in the hands of the enemy. 201

Libya was urgently flown by General Paulus, sent by Halder "to prevent this soldier from completely losing his mind." Paulus did not have a strong character, and Rommel, who subjugated the Italian generals older than his age and rank, easily subjugated Paulus to himself. Subdued so much that a representative of the OKH authorized a second assault on Tobruk.

Rommel attacked at night, and by dawn on May 1 broke through the Tobruk line of defense. The tanks rushed to the port, but fell into a minefield, losing almost half of the 40 vehicles. The Australians, under the command of General Morshead, fought tenaciously and actively, while the Italians refused to attack. By May 3, the situation was determined: the Germans captured part of the outer defense of the fortress, but they were not able to capture it. Frustrated, Paulus left for Berlin, banning new assault attempts. On May 12, the Tiger convoy arrived in Alexandria,

sent at the request of Wavell, the new commander of the British forces in Egypt. Admirals and generals objected to sending a convoy until the danger of an invasion of the British Isles was eliminated, but W. Churchill managed to get his way. 57 tanks sank along with one of the transports, but the remaining 238 arrived in Africa. Almost all the Matilda tanks¹ that the British army had at that time were here. Wavell counterattacked. This decision was

undoubtedly the right one, but the general made a typical English mistake: before a large offensive, he decided to conduct a relatively small one in order to "study the situation and capture advantageous starting positions." As a result, Rommel clarified not only the plans of the enemy, but also the pattern of his offensive, and, most importantly, that the offensive would be supported by Matilda tanks. To oppose these tanks was

¹ Tank "Matilda" was quite unusual. It had weak armament (a machine gun or an English 2-pounder), but had powerful 75-78 mm armor. German Pz.-III tanks received 50 mm armor only starting with the H modification and 70 mm armor from the J modification, that is, from the end of 1941. Practically neither the tank guns nor the anti-tank guns of the "African Corps" penetrated the armor of the Matilda tanks. 202

nothing, but Rommel was not embarrassed, and he turned the 88-mm anti-aircraft gun into an anti-tank gun. The gun was expensive and noticeable, but its shells, designed to destroy aircraft at high altitudes, pierced any armor at short and medium distances. The "African Corps" had only 12 of these guns, but they were placed in such a way as to create fire traps in the most likely directions of attack.

By the beginning of the battle, Rommel had, along with all the reinforcements, about 100 tanks, half of them were in the Tobruk area. Wavell deployed 200 gun tanks on the Libyan border.

The march of the British troops to approach the enemy began on the evening of June 14 and continued throughout the night. The tankers wanted to attack on the move, even before dawn, but the higher authorities ordered to wait until the artillery came up and it was light enough for them to open fire. But the guns got stuck in the sand, and in the morning the Matilda tanks went on the attack. They immediately fell into one of the traps, and the commander managed to transmit only one message: "They are

blowing my tanks to pieces." Before evening, the British lost half of their tanks, and Rommel managed to transfer the tank regiment located there from under Tobruk. The forces became even, and the next day the "African Corps" launched a counteroffensive, threatening the open flank of the British with the 5th mechanized (light) division, and attacking its positions with the 15th tank. On the fourth day of the operation, the Nile army withdrew to its original positions, losing 91 tanks (against 12 tanks lost by the Germans) and its name.

Now it has become the 8th Army. The failure of the summer counter-offensive cost Wavell, who was replaced as commander-in-chief by Auchinleck. He began his activities as a commander with the following historical order:

"There is a real danger that our friend Rommel will become a sorcerer or scarecrow for our soldiers. Too much is already being said about him. He is by no means a superhuman, although he is very energetic and has powers. Even if he were superhuman, it would be highly undesirable for our soldiers to believe in his supernatural power."

203

I want you to dispel in every possible way the notion that Rommel is anything more than an ordinary German general. For this, it seems important not to name Rommel when we talk about the enemy in Libya. We should mention "Germans" or "Axis" or

"enemy", but in no case focus on Rommel.

Please take measures for the immediate execution of this order and bring to the attention of all commanders that from a psychological point of view this is a matter of the highest importance.

-4- While the parties in North Africa were marching from Egypt to Libya and back, the Wehrmacht defeated Yugoslavia, Greece and British troops in the Balkans. The situation in the Mediterranean was changing as the Luftwaffe's line of deployment for squadrons shifted further and further south. By the end of April 1941, the German "air umbrella" covered almost the entire eastern and central Mediterranean Sea¹.

Many new opportunities arose, but there was not enough time to implement them: on May 15, Operation Barbarossa was to begin. Although on April 30 A. Hitler decided to postpone the Eastern campaign for five weeks, half killing the chances of success in Russia², this did not change the situation dramatically. The leadership of the OKW rushed about, trying in a matter of days to determine strategic priorities and outline the contours of upcoming operations. These days, a squadron of aircraft is being transferred to Iraq, an attempt

¹ Taking into account the airfield on the island of Rhodes (Italian Dodecanese). The capabilities of this site should not be overestimated (a little more than 30 aircraft could be based on it), but, firstly, there was the possibility of expanding it and, secondly. The Luftwaffe could use Rhodes not as a full-fledged air force base, but as a "jump airfield" for fighters. In making this fundamental decision, the

² main role was played not by the prospects for operations in the Mediterranean (there was not enough time for them anyway), but by problems with the transfer and putting in order of the Kleist tank group.

204

to land Syria (without any diplomatic or military support for this operation¹), finally, the Cretan campaign follows.

This operation is one of the mysteries of World War II. Crete, no doubt, looks beautiful on the map, being in the very center of the triangle Greece - Turkey - Cyreneica, but this "beauty" is purely geographical. Communication and operational lines run either to the west or (in variants) to the east of this triangle. Crete is located between Athens and Tobruk, but it was not possible to turn Athens into the main supply base for the German-Italian troops in Africa (and Tobruk still remained in the hands of the enemy). In all other respects, the island is completely useless for both sides, as evidenced by the fact that it remained German until the very end of the war - it never occurred to the Allies to waste time and energy on this "strategic backwater". If the OKW command was worried about the possible use of the territory of Crete by the enemy, then, after all, the Axis owned the

airfields of Athens and Rhodes and, therefore, controlled the sky over Crete. Nevertheless, on April 25, a decision was made to conduct Operation Mercury, in which the 7th Airborne and 5th Mountain Rifle Divisions of the Wehrmacht were

involved. For the transfer of troops, 550 transport aircraft and 60 gliders were allocated, the 8th Air Corps covered the operation. Contrary to popular opinion in post-war literature, the landing on Crete was a complete success. The British managed to evacuate only half of their thirty thousandth contingent, the troops of the Greek ally were simply abandoned. The Germans captured over 30,000 prisoners at the cost of 4,000 dead and missing and 2,500 wounded. Given that the defenders had twice as many troops on the island as these actions only contributed to the occupation of Syria by the Free French troops,

supported by the British fleet (the operation lasted from June 8 to July 11).

² In addition, the British lost a cruiser and 6 destroyers. A number of ships, including an aircraft carrier, received damage. 205

all the German-Italian forces involved in the Mercury (including those that were part of the amphibious assault forces that could not be landed), the result can only be called brilliant. However, its strategic consequences were completely unexpected: Hitler banned large-scale airborne operations "in view of unreasonably large losses." In practice, the Reich exchanged a whole branch of the army for an island in the Mediterranean that was completely unnecessary to it .

The Mercury had exhausted all the time available to Germany in the Mediterranean. In the following months, Axis air superiority becomes illusory: in June, the focus of the German forces shifts from south to east, and Luftwaffe squadrons are redeployed to assist the Barbarossa. This circumstance dramatically increases the importance of Malta - a small island located exactly halfway between the Italian port of Reggio di Calabria and Tripoli.

-5-

In British sources, Malta is rightly called the "island of the fortress" and "island of the hero." In 1941-1942, the British used it as a naval and air base. In June, over 140 aircraft are transferred to Malta. This was not enough to cover the island from a serious German attack, supported by the same 8th Aviation Corps, but it made it possible to solve pressing problems and made it possible to be active during periods when there were no significant German forces in Sicily.

aviation.

In the coming months, Cunningham would concentrate the 10th U-boat Flotilla and Force K on Malta, consisting of two light cruisers and two destroyers . "Maltius Not surprisingly, in the strategic role-playing games

¹ discussed above based on World War II, the German command invariably began by canceling the Crete operation.

² In November 1941, the "B" compound of the same composition will be added to them.
206

strike formations" immediately began active operations on the communications of the "African Corps" and Italian forces in North Africa; at the same time, they covered destroyers and fast transports delivering food, fuel and ammunition to Tobruk.

From July to December 1941 (when the Luftwaffe air corps is deployed to Sicily), "Maltese strike formations", supported by RAF bombers and torpedo bombers, control the space between Libya and Sicily. During this time, the Italian merchant fleet lost a third of its tonnage, and in North Africa the Axis countries had a tense situation with fuel for tanks and for "desert aviation". German military leaders in the Mediterranean theater (Rommel, Kesselring) demanded that something be done with the island. From time to time, the OKB began to plan a landing operation, but this was done

somehow uncertainly: it seems that the command authorities were ready to seize on any excuse to cancel the landing. Thus, an organic defect in the position of the Italo-German forces in North Africa remained, which made the defeat of the "African Corps" a matter of time.

-6-

For five months, from June to November 1941, there was a lull in the Western Desert. During this time, Rommel's forces increased to 4 full-time tank regiments (three in the 14th Panzer, one in the 5th Light Division), which amounted to 168 tanks (according to other sources, 174). To alleviate Rommel's situation, the High Command renamed the 5th Light Division into the 21st Panzer Division, which, of course, did not add armored vehicles to it. In addition, Rommel managed to form an "African division" on the spot "from improvised material" - later the 90th Infantry.

If the German leadership, preoccupied during this period exclusively with problems in Russia, did almost nothing to strengthen the "African Corps" (except for

207

carried out the transportation of those forces that were promised to Rommel at his appointment, that is, on February 6), then W. Churchill insisted on the transfer of very significant forces to Egypt. Auchinleck received four armored brigades, and Morshead received one (it was intended to strike from Tobruk towards the advancing British troops). In the fortress, the British 70th Division replaced the 9th Australian. Three new motorized infantry divisions dramatically increased the strike force of the 8th Army. By November,

Rommel had about 170 German and 146 incapacitated Italian tanks against Auchinleck's 710 tanks (about 500 more were on the way, making up the reserve). In the air, things were no better - 120 German and 200 Italian aircraft against 700 British aircraft. What Rommel lacked was the Italian infantry. Alas, in addition to the fact that this infantry had a low combat capability, it was also not equipped with motorization equipment, which made it simply useless for mobile operations characteristic of the North African theater of operations. Auchinleck intended to pin down the

enemy from the front with one corps, bypass his flank with the other, defeat the mobile units and, in cooperation with the Tobruk garrison, destroy the "African Corps", which the British called "the backbone of the Italo-German forces in Africa." Outwardly, this plan looks quite rational, but the British did not bother to organize the interaction of the three groups, moreover, they used a significant part of the tanks to support the infantry. Surprise was completely guaranteed. Rommel, who was preparing for the

assault on Tobruk and having concentrated his strike units in the area of the fortress, had no idea about the beginning of the movement of the enveloping enemy grouping. In addition, after a severe storm, German airfields were flooded with water, and not a single reconnaissance aircraft could take off from the soaked lanes.

By the evening of November 18, the British completed the enveloping maneuver and turned north, gradually expanding the front of the offensive. Rommel begins a counter-manoeuve, but in the absence of aerial reconnaissance, he cannot imagine the real enemy grouping. Nevertheless, blindly launched counterattacks were successful and stopped the advance.

208

Auchinleck¹, putting the British 4th and 7th tank brigades in critical

position.

On November 22-23, the headquarters of the 4th British tank brigade and the headquarters of the "African Corps", which were in the way of the advancing tanks, were successively defeated. In both cases, the commanders escaped capture, as they were busy carrying out the attack in other sectors, but the loss of officers of the operations department and radio stations naturally caused a disruption in command and control.

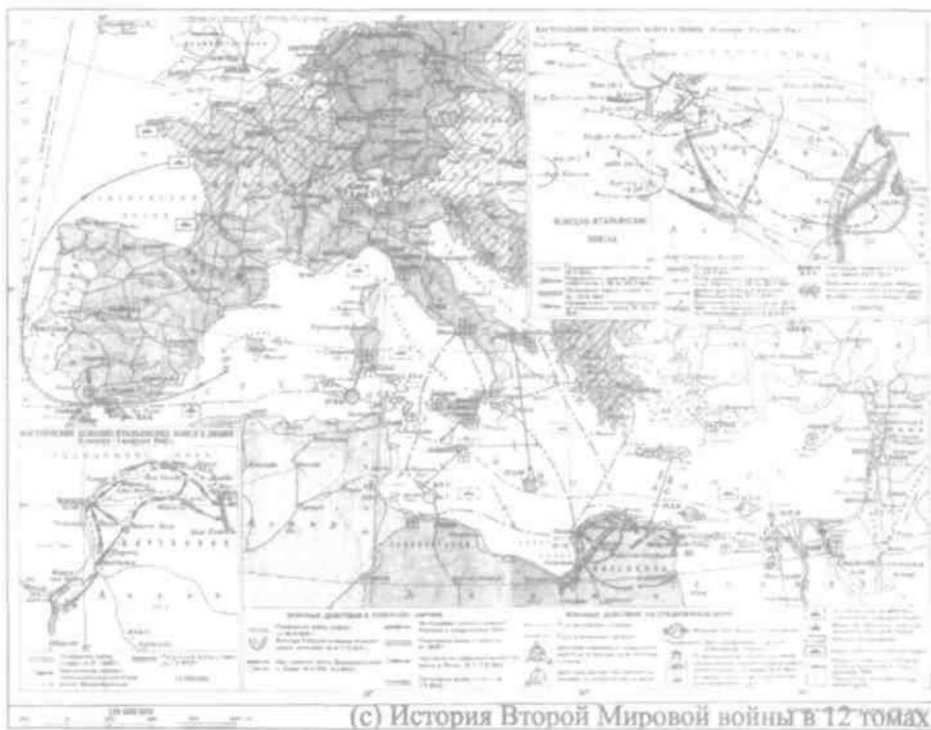
The next day, Cruwell unexpectedly broke into the location of the vehicles of the British and South African divisions, causing a complete rout there. He, however, delayed the development of success and gave the British the opportunity to organize a defense. In the evening, Cruwell won a brilliant victory, breaking through the enemy front, defeating the division, capturing over 3,000 prisoners, but this victory cost him and Rommel 70 tanks out of 160 (only one direct blow!) And all the advantages gained in the previous days.

Nevertheless, Cunningham summed up the results of six days of battle, found that 70 out of 500 tanks remained in the 30th Corps and decided to abandon the continuation of the operation. Auchinleck demanded it continue, and on November 26 removed Cunningham from command, handing over the 8th Army to his chief of staff, Ricci. The commander of the British forces in Egypt was no doubt right, for even now the 30th Corps was stronger than Rommel's entire army, and new reinforcements were soon to arrive. Rommel,

intuitively feeling the enemy's hesitation, tried to tip the scales in his favor with a crazy throw to Egypt - 100 kilometers in 5 hours. It was a brilliant decision that would have made it possible to win immediately

¹ In reality, Auchinleck led all the troops in Egypt, while the shock group (actually, the 8th Army) was led by Cunningham. A similar situation developed among the Germans, where Rommel led the German troops in Africa (later the Panzer Army "Africa"), while Cruwell commanded the "African Corps", of which this army, in fact, consisted. In reality, of course, Auchinleck and Rommel "de facto" directly controlled the troops.

209



Africa and the Mediterranean, late 1941

210

battle for North Africa. If Rommel had fuel, if communications had worked after the loss of the Afrika Korps radios, if the Italians had at least moved forward across open territory and seized the British warehouses. The counterattack failed, and Rommel, who had

60 tanks left, was forced to withdraw the tanks and attack the enemy at Tobruk, where the situation was critical. On the night of November 26, the New Zealand division, supported by 90 Matilda tanks, broke through the German defenses and connected with

garrison of Tobruk. Reinforcements follow. By the end of the day, the superiority of the British in tanks reaches 5:1 (7:1 in cannon), and one British division is quite enough to defeat the entire "African Corps" - the same New Zealand, for example. By December 1, however, this ratio improved to 3:1, as the British suffered another defeat, one of the New Zealand brigades was surrounded and defeated.

. Auchinleck flew back from Cairo, ordered the dispatch of reinforcements to the front in the amount of two divisions and the continuation of the operation. Until the 7th, Rommel held his positions, but on that day, having learned that a severe crisis broke out in Russia and there was no question of any reinforcements until the end of the year, he decided to break away from the enemy and retreat to Libya. The British won Operation Crusader, captured isolated Italian garrisons at Benghazi and several other points, and advanced into Tripolitania to about the same positions they had in February. It cost five hundred tanks and almost all the veterans of the 8th Army. -7- January 5, 1942, a convoy with a hundred tanks broke into Tripoli. Having restored the strength of the

"African Corps", on January 21, Rommel struck at the advanced British positions. A day later, the Italian Minister of War arrived at his headquarters, demanding an immediate end to this adventure, but by this time the British were already rapidly retreating to the east. By the beginning of February, Rommel recaptured Benghazi.

211

(apparently, according to tradition), and the 8th Army withdrew to Al-Ghazala, surrendering most of Cyrenaica without a fight. However, Rommel managed to overcome the hesitation of the Italians (who had all the supplies of the corps) and get into contact with the enemy's defense line only in April.

All this time, Kesselring, desperate to get permission for a landing operation against Malta, bombs the island. Formation "K" was killed in a minefield in the Tripoli region, formation "B" suffered heavy losses. Only submarines operate on the supply lines of the Panzer Army "Africa", and soon they leave for Alexandria.

W. Churchill, realizing that a crisis has ripened in the Mediterranean theater, demands that Auchinleck go on the offensive under the threat of surrendering command. Under these conditions, a new big battle begins in North Africa.

Formally, the German-Italian forces outnumber the enemy - 9 divisions against 6, but the Italian divisions still do not have vehicles (and besides, the British divisions are numerically stronger). In terms of tanks, the balance of forces is approximately the same as in Operation Crusader. The British - 850 + 420 in reserve, Rommel - 230 Italian tanks and 330 German, of which 50 are light. In artillery, the preponderance was also on the side of the British, in aviation the forces were approximately equal. Rommel used the same pattern

that Auchinleck had used half a year earlier - a pinning blow in the center and a sweeping movement on the open flank. The initial success was complete, and the "African Corps" turned to the sea to encircle the 13th English Corps. Here, however, the German tankers ran into American Grant tanks armed with a 75 mm long-barreled gun (versus 40 mm on the British and 50 mm on the new German tanks). In one battle, the Germans lost a third of the available

tanks.

On the third day of the operation, Rommel ordered to go on the defensive in an extremely unreliable position - in the rear of the enemy fortified line.

In practice, the "African Corps" was blocked, subjected to attacks from the ground and from the air, and, according to the British, had to capitulate any day.

212

Rommel was aware of the scale of the risk. To win the war in Africa, it was enough for the British to cover themselves from the "African Corps" with minefields and "Grant" tanks and the main forces to attack the Italians, who would not have withstood this blow in any case. Rommel, however, believed that Ricci would not risk launching an offensive at the front without eliminating the "cauldron" in his rear. And indeed, time after time, English tanks attacked the fortified German positions in small groups. For a week, Rommel made a passage in the minefields, defeated two British brigades with private counterattacks, and captured 4 artillery regiments. The tank forces of the British

were melting away. By June 6, due to combat losses and breakdowns, more than 200 tanks failed. On the 11th, Rommel went on the offensive and immediately "caught" two British tank brigades, squeezing them between his attacking formations and destroying them with crossfire. The British defense at

Cyrenac collapsed, and an uncontrolled retreat of units and formations to the Egyptian border began. W. Churchill demanded to keep at least Tobruk. Auchinleck, in obedience to the order, left one and a half divisions and 70 tanks in the fortress. The Afrika Korps quickly

marched west, pursuing the retreating 8th Army. He proceeded past Tobruk, arousing the confidence of the garrison that nothing threatened them in the next few hours. However, at night, German tanks turned back, and at 5.20 am on June 20, dive bombers attacked the defensive perimeter of the fortress. At 8.30 the tanks entered the gap and

rushed to the city and port. On the morning of the next day, General Klopfer surrendered 35,000 men and military equipment. Now 80% of the transport of the army "Africa" were captured English cars.

Saint-Jean d'Acre fell. Rommel was handed a field marshal's baton, but the commander of the German troops in Africa understood better than others that the year lost during the siege of Tobruk could not be returned. Every day the allies became stronger and stronger at sea, and on land, and in the air. So far, Kesselring's squadrons are capable of neutralizing Malta, but this will not last long.

213

-8- Nothing has been decided yet. The British retreated from the border of Libya and Egypt, although they still had three times as many tanks and 4 fresh, untouched divisions. Rommel spent three days persuading the Italian command to allow him to continue the pursuit. Ricci is trying to gain a foothold in

positions at Mersa Matruh. Auchinleck removes him from command, understands the state of the army and orders to withdraw even further east, to El Alamein, a defensive position sandwiched between the sea and the Qatar depression, impassable for armored vehicles. He takes on a huge responsibility because El Alamein is the last defensive position before Cairo and Alexandria. If the 8th Army is defeated here, it will be driven back across the Nile. On June 30, Rommel was 100 kilometers from Alexandria. Archives were

burned in Cairo. The English fleet went to the Red Sea. The battle for Egypt reached its highest point.

Several thousand people and 60 tanks remained in Rommel's strike force, there was no fuel, people were exhausted to the last degree, like them

commanding. And Rommel stops - just for one day - to wait for the Italians and establish at least some supply. During this day, Auchinleck had set up some sort of defense and put his divisions in order.

By July 5, the German offensive had stopped. About 30 tanks remained in the "African Corps", and the British, with about 400 armored vehicles, launched a retaliatory offensive.

It may seem implausible, but Rommel repulsed this offensive. The losses of the parties on July 21 are indicative - 118 British tanks against 3 German ones. By the end of the month, both sides remained in their positions.

Then there would be another offensive by Rommel at the end of August, which Montgomery (he replaced Auchinleck) managed to beat off, although not without difficulty. Gradually, the British learned to defend themselves with a superiority of forces of 3-4: 1 in their favor, and the position of the "African Corps" immediately became difficult. Koseny when Montgomery already had a sixfold superiority in tanks. 214

four times in the infantry and three times in the air, the British went on the offensive, and after two weeks of continuous fighting they managed to break through the enemy defenses. Rommel, however, eluded the enveloping maneuver and began to withdraw. There was no chance, but so far the British paid for their advance again to the same positions, to Tobruk and Benghazi, very dearly. But time worked on them.

November 8 British and American troops landed in Algiers. True, this was French territory, but the allies agreed among themselves not to consider France an independent state. No one really interfered with the landing, however, the loss of the dead and missing amounted to 2,000 people.

Now the Panzer Army "Africa" was sandwiched between two military groups, each of which was many times stronger than it. Allied aviation dominated the air, the supply of the Italo-German units in Africa almost ceased. The fighting in this theater of operations, however, continued for another six months, was replete with crises and major losses on the part of the allies, and ended only in May 1943, when the remnants of the Axis troops were destroyed or captured in Tunisia. -9- In this review, we focused mainly on the period of victories of the "African

Corps", telling much less about its defeat and final surrender. This is due to the complete absence of any strategic pattern in the confusion of the battles of late 1942 - early 1943. After Rommel's attempt to immediately break through the British defenses near El Alamein and defeat the 8th Army failed, the German-Italian troops in Africa had no chance of successfully continuing the struggle. The campaign of 1798-1799 was repeated again: Rommel, 1 In response, Hitler occupied southern France, and French sailors scuttled the remnants of the fleet in Toulon, which two and a half years ago was the fifth in the world. 215

how then Kleber could give some orders, act, achieve success, even very loud and beautiful, but strategically his position was lost. After Operation Torch, when the 1st American Army joined the British 8th Army, and the Allied aviation gained predominance in the entire theater of operations, Rommel lost even the chances of inflicting serious damage on the enemy. On the other hand, the actions of the allies, strategically well-founded, were such a desecration of the foundations of operational art that, really, there is no way to analyze them in detail.

need. All the

features of the Anglo-Saxon style of military art, which boils down to the destruction of the enemy due to the undeniable predominance in forces and, especially, in the means of conducting armed struggle, clearly manifested in the actions in the North African theater of war. Eventually, Montgomery learned to defend against Rommel with a three- to five-fold lead. All the abilities of Rommel, who was undoubtedly the best tactician of the Second World War, were only enough to drag out the resistance. The battles in Africa are interesting and instructive precisely because of this: the art of strategy (for Rommel - bordering on magic) turned out to be powerless before a machine war based on superiority in resources and in the economy.

In this regard, the question is legitimate: could the Germans have won the African campaign at its early stage (if not in 1940, when A. Hitler's intervention in B. Mussolini's African strategy was unlikely for political reasons, then in 1941)? It is clear that having concentrated a full-scale tank group in Cyrenaica under the

command of Rommel, Guderian or Hoth, the command of the Design Bureau could expect quick and decisive results from it. But where to get this tank group? Before the start of Barbarossa, of course, this was not a problem. But a campaign was planned in Russia, and the question of a war with the Soviet Union, let me remind you, was resolved in principle already at the end of 1940. The idea of extracting an entire tank group from the troops operating in the summer and autumn of 1941 on the Eastern Front does not seem sound. Yes, these troops could bring victory in Africa. But on the other hand, the 5th Light and 15th Panzer Divisions, whether

they
216

involved on the Eastern Front, could well be the "straw" that breaks the camel's back. Such a mobile corps, for example, could strike at the junction of the 12th and 18th armies on Chernivtsi-Proskurov or on Zhmerynka, which would sharply weaken the stability of the Southwestern Front in the border battle and could lead to an "echo" version of the Minsk boiler. Could the Soviet command cope with simultaneous catastrophes in the north and south? The problem is that in the German army (after June 22, 1941) there were no extra troops left, and any division sent to Africa was desperately needed elsewhere, primarily in the East.

The following questions also arise: How to transport this tank group to Africa? How to supply it there? And if we assume that the German command somehow managed to solve all these problems (in particular, it was able to liquidate Malta in a timely

manner, establish interaction between

its aviation and the Italian fleet¹, most dominance at sea, of course, refusing

aggression against the USSR), then it would have coped with the landing in England. And such a landing would be a much more effective tool for winning the war than the entire campaign in North Africa, even the most successful one.

capturing topics

The second plot: aircraft carriers are attacking!

We are back again in July 1941. The Battle of Smolensk was unfolding in the center of the Eastern Front, on the flanks Rundstedt was approaching Kyiv, and Leeb was preparing the turn of the 18th Army towards Tallinn. In the Western Desert

¹ After the strategy game in 1998, the "German" team joked, paraphrasing a humorous miniature from the 1960s: "In order to win world domination, the Germans needed only victory. Only the victory of the Italian fleet over the English in the Mediterranean. And the Nazi generals achieved it. Big, big masters of the military

business..."
217

pause continues. Troops of the "Free French" (read, English) settle down in Syria.

The United States of America still remains aloof from the general European war. The Lend-Lease program is in full swing, American ships are guarding convoys in the western Atlantic, neutrality has been violated long ago and irreversibly, but Germany prefers not to notice this. The current state of

affairs suits everyone except Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the brilliant politician who became President of the United States in the year of the culmination of the global industrial crisis. Even then, in 1932, he came to the conclusion that the Bolsheviks were right about the "general crisis of capitalism", and that a world war was the only real alternative to the "Sovietization" of the world.

F. Roosevelt understood the attraction of the communist idea. Until now, it has remained the only intelligible concept of industrial society that could be called "just". In the once Orthodox Russia, justice was considered the prerogative of the devil (for mercy befits the Lord), but the religious tradition by no means prevented the Russian poor from cracking down on their "oppressors" and swearing allegiance to the new regime, which promised factories to workers, land to peasants and secondary education (and with it the future) - to all without exception.

F. Roosevelt's "New Deal" was an attempt to respond to the communist challenge. But the President knew that this answer was not enough. In order for the United States to be able to build a society that will be, if not more just, then certainly more attractive than the Bolshevik "devil's paradise in hell", the world order that has developed after Versailles must be completely reformatted. Britain, following Germany and

France, must lose all colonial possessions. This will entail the emergence of a whole system of "independent states" that will need weapons and food. *"Weapons and bread. Only without stupid conditions. And if possible, for free. Or on credit . On credit! They will need large loans to A. and B. Strugatsky. "Predatory things of the century".*

¹
218

You. In terms of per capita, much more than the United States provided to Great Britain in the last war (for which the "Lady of the Seas" paid with her fleet) and provide now (Roosevelt decided long ago that Churchill would have to pay for Lend-Lease with the empire: nothing is worth as expensive as gratuitous aid.) This "world debt" will be backed by a single "global economy", with the United States taking over the management of this debt, and the interrogator, and the whole world.

Then, and only then, will the New Deal be completed.

F. Roosevelt faced very complex strategic tasks. First of all, it was necessary to achieve the entry of the United States into the war. This was in the interests of the country, it was prepared by the entire previous policy of the president and two years of the status of a "non-belligerent state", but F. Roosevelt could not take a decisive step on his own: the "isolationists" would immediately split the Congress, and with it the entire American society - by no means stable and far from prosperity.

Therefore, the enemy had to attack the United States himself. Since Germany shied away from this honor, another enemy had to be found. Fortunately, in the geopolitically fraught world of the 1940s, this was not difficult. On July 24, 1941, with the

permission of the Vichy government, Japanese troops landed in French Indochina, capturing the important Kamrang naval and air base. Of course, Pétain's consent was forced, but at least diplomatic decorum was better observed than the US did with Iceland. The next day, the Japanese government informed the United States of the reasons for the annexation of Indochina and invited the State Department to normalize relations between the countries. In response, the United States, Great Britain and Holland (and in that order!) announced a freeze on Japanese assets in their bans.

219

kah. It is significant that the territorial integrity of the French colonial empire was defended by three powers, one of which was occupied, and the other did not have diplomatic relations with the Vichy government.

"By intervening in the Indochina crisis that came to hand (which in no way affected the interests of the United States), Roosevelt showed the British another step [to formal entry into the war]. He correctly calculated that in the current situation, Great Britain is doomed to support the White House and persuade the Dutch government in exile to do so. This forced the anti-Japanese position of official London.

It was a major diplomatic victory for the American administration. The strategic operation to destroy the Anglo-Japanese naval alliance, begun almost twenty years ago at the Washington Conference, found a spectacular conclusion: in the summer of 1941, a war between former partners was put on the agenda. In this war, England did not have any positive goals and, therefore, could not win anything. She was offered a military risk, the results were supposed to go to the Americans. So Roosevelt's policy in the July crisis was more anti-British than anti-Japanese. Tactically, the situation in the Far East instantly lost stability. The Empire of Japan bought oil from Indonesia and

Alaska. Roosevelt blocked both channels, but did not provide the wells with excessive

protection. Now all participants in the conflict had to reckon with the possibility of Japanese aggression. The peculiarity of the situation was that the occupation of Borneo was impossible without the neutralization of Singapore. That is, Japan was provoked to attack

the stronghold of British military and naval power in the Pacific Ocean, objectively acting as a geopolitical ally of the States .

¹ S. Pereslegin, E. Pereslegina. "Pacific Premiere", M.-SPb., ACT, Terra fantastica. 2001. 220

-2-

In Japan, the situation that developed in the summer of 1941 was perceived as critical. Japan could no longer withdraw from Kamrang: such a step would immediately lead to a severe internal political crisis. But the country was not ready to fight simultaneously with the USA and Great Britain. Over the following months, Japanese diplomats in the United States made desperate efforts to find some kind of compromise acceptable to both sides.

The leaders of the country understood that there was almost no hope. But being

in the face of imminent war with the two strongest maritime powers in the world, the leaders of the Land of the Rising Sun were ready to grab at any straw. In response to a request from Ambassador Nomura in Washington to give him "some more time," the Foreign Ministry immediately telegraphed: "It is

terribly difficult for us to change the date set in my telegram No. efforts. Stick to our policy and do your best. Spare no effort to achieve the solution we desire. You cannot guess the reasons why we want to settle Japanese-American relations by the 25th, however, if within the next three or four days you can complete your negotiations with the Americans, if the signing of the agreement can be completed by the 29th (come on, I will write this date for you in words - the twenty-ninth), if it is possible to exchange appropriate notes, if we can reach an understanding with England and Holland and, in short, if everything is completed, we agree to wait until that day. But this date cannot be changed at all. After it, events will develop automatically.

The combined fleet, which after September 1939 was headed by Vice Admiral (from 11/15/1940 - full admiral) Isuroku Yamamoto, in August 1941 was replenished with two new aircraft carriers - Shokaku and Zuikaku. Now the fleet consisted of 6 heavy aircraft carriers, consolidated into three divisions, and 3 light aircraft carriers (one was in completion, or rather, in restructuring from a supply base

supply 221

boats). It was these ships that, according to the plan of the commander in chief, were to play the main role in the impending war. In the

summer of 1941, Yamamoto, like many other Japanese leaders of that time, found himself in a strange, even ambivalent position. At night, he prayed that Nomura would bring "peace for our generation" from Washington. During the day, Yamamoto prepared the Combined Fleet for an entirely inevitable war.

-3-

Oil reserves could only be enough for the first six months of the war. Therefore, Japan's strategy was practically predetermined: an attack on the Dutch East Indies and the capture of the oil fields of Borneo "at any cost". But the region of Indonesia was controlled by the powerful British naval base Singapore, until the neutralization of which there could be no question of any offensive in the South Pacific Ocean. Here the interests of Japan, as already noted, coincided with the interests of the United States: Roosevelt also needed, under all circumstances, to rid the British of Singapore, their main stronghold in the Pacific Ocean. F. Roosevelt was aware that an attack by Singapore would require the Japanese to secure a line of operations from the Inland Sea of Japan to the Malacca Strait. The Philippine archipelago, on which the US Asiatic Fleet was based, hung over this line from the flank, thus making the Philippines a likely target for a Japanese attack. With the prevailing balance of power, this created the risk of losing positions in the southern sector of the Pacific Ocean, but F. Roosevelt considered it acceptable. The American Committee of Chiefs of Staff, provoking Japan to war, proceeded from the fact that the deeper the Combined Fleet gets involved in operations in the south, the more it will be weakened by the start of the American counteroffensive on the Hawaii-Midway Directorate

¹ Let me remind you that N. Chamberlain said this phrase when he returned from Munich in 1938 (see the first plot of the first part).

Philippines. Since such a counter-offensive was planned for the second or third month of the war, the temporary loss of Manila (even if it actually happens) will not be of decisive importance. Great Britain, for its part,

understood very well that the very existence of the empire depended on whether Singapore could be held. W. Churchill's problem was that there was nowhere to find troops for the defense of Malaya. Even worse was the case with the ships. "The once Great Fleet by 1941 was reduced to several tactical

formations, torn in attempts to cover all the key points of the huge empire. As of August, His Majesty's fleet had only nine combat-ready battleships, even if we refer to the fully

combat-ready Nelson, which, due to the weakening of the hull in the bow, gave no more than 18 knots of travel and was afraid to fire with the main caliber, old and not very successful "R" and even more elderly "Queens", who were known in the last war as the best ships of Great Britain. (Six more battleships were being repaired in England and the USA.) It was instructive to watch how the British, seduced in 1921 in Washington by cheap imperialist policies, are now trying to allocate at least something for the Far East.

Theoretically, in some of their "layouts" it was already about seven battleships! The Joint Chiefs of Staff had in mind the four "Rs" under repair or occupied in the Atlantic, and "Barham" with "Valient" from the Mediterranean.

Sir Dudley Pound, acting First Lord of the Admiralty, instead of the last two ships (which he considered absolutely necessary in Alexandria), wanted to use the Nelson with the Rodney and for some reason the Rinaun. The problem was that the Rodney was not yet out of repair, the Nelson was up to the "Washington" standard training ship in speed, and the thirty-knot Renown was a typical example of a "military build", with its inevitable "come on". In general, this connection - seven old ships belonging to three different types, differing in speed, configuration and caliber of artillery, armor - was so similar to the Russian Port Arthur

223

squadron that Yamamoto simply prayed to the gods for the arrival of this floating cabinet of curiosities in Singapore.

However, neither the Admiralty nor the CNS intended to move the old battleships east of Colombo. It was believed that in the Indian Ocean they would protect English communications and, possibly, India and Ceylon from the Japanese. Yamamoto at that moment was no more interested in Colombo than in Russian Tashkent, so the Eastern Fleet of the Admiralty "had every chance of getting stuck in the strategic "Through the Looking Glass" - in a place where it does not protect anything and does not threaten anyone. "Their lordships" belonged to such calmly in the future, probably believing that it would not be possible to single out the ships anyway"¹ .

Under these conditions, W. Churchill, by the authority of the Prime Minister, ordered one of the two newest ships of the metropolitan fleet, the battleship Prince of Wales, to be allocated for the defense of the Far East. W. Churchill said that this ship "will become an indefinite threat" and will be able to have a braking effect on all Japanese operations south of the Philippine archipelago. The Admiralty reacted to the prospect of weakening the fleet of the mother country without any enthusiasm, but it was impossible to argue with Sir Winston, and the connection of T. Philipps as part of the Prince of Wales and the old battlecruiser Repulse was sent to Singapore. Two aircraft carriers were assigned to cover it, but one of them ("Ark Royal") was sunk in the Mediterranean Sea, and the second

("Indomitable") ran aground in the West

Indies. W. Churchill's strategy was rather subtle. He understood that the overall command in the Far East would inevitably pass into the hands of the Americans. But if British battleships turn out to be the main backbone of the Asian fleet, if at the same time Singapore can be held until the main forces of the US Pacific Fleet arrive in Southeast Asia, if the rest of the "critical points" are preserved - India, the Suez Canal, Gibraltar, the Metropolis, then perhaps the British colonial empire will survive this war. S. Pereslegin, E. Pereslegina. Pacific Premiere.

1



The sinking of the aircraft carrier Ark Royal



The sinking of the battleship Barkham

225



Cruiser Chikuma



Aircraft carrier Zuikaku

226

The whole problem lay in the fact that W. Churchill regarded the real military capabilities of Japan as low as F. Roosevelt. In their plans, the British and American leaders gave the Japanese the role of objects, not subjects of strategy. -4-

Yamamoto understood that the United States was provoking him to strike at Singapore and the Philippines (with further development of operations towards Indonesia). But he had every reason to believe that the opponents did not foresee the scope and organization of the Japanese offensive in the South Seas. And even less do they expect that the war will begin not with an attack on Philippine airfields, but with the neutralization of the US Pacific Fleet, which is settling in the Hawaiian Islands thousands of kilometers east of the emerging new theater of operations. There was nothing unexpected about the attack on Pearl Harbor. Over the past twenty

years, this operational idea has been tested a couple of times in war games and has just not been discussed in illustrated magazines. A bold attack on the enemy's main base - such a decision appeals to an amateur, but a professional knows only too well why in real life it is impossible. The strike formation must go too far, too many refuelings at sea, too many enemy base aircraft, too high a chance of being detected - not even by official patrols, but by random aircraft or ships following from the base or to the base on some business. It is possible to divert the attention of the entire enemy team in a military game, in life there are too many degrees of freedom ... In addition to these general arguments, there was also "tactics". Pearl Harbor harbor is too shallow for torpedoes to burrow into the mud at the bottom. The effectiveness of horizontal bombing against ships was an unknown quantity, and the Imperial Japanese Navy did not have armor-piercing

bombs. There were not enough fighters to simultaneously provide cover for aircraft carrier 227

connection and the capture of local air supremacy over Pearl Harbor.

In the short months leading up to the start of the war, Yamamoto sought and found organizational solutions to these and many other problems. Minoru Genda, the Combined Fleet's best staff officer, managed to balance the operation. True, for her it was necessary to attract all six large aircraft carriers and all eight squadron refueling tankers. And only the most experienced pilots, the best of the best. Yamamoto literally "section" of the naval base

aviation and light aircraft carriers.

Japan started the war without a single ship in reserve, not a single aircraft, not a single pilot.

While the flight crew of the strike aircraft carrier formation was training in bombing on a fairly accurately constructed model of the island of Oahu, on which the Pearl Harbor naval base was located, and craftsmen from the technical services of the fleet welded aviation stabilizers to 406-mm armor-piercing shells, and attached to torpedoes wooden "fins", events continued to run their course. Roosevelt and Churchill adopted the "Atlantic Charter", which tells about the post-war world order. The Japanese government has changed. In Russia, the Wehrmacht defeated the Southwestern Front near Kiev, in the north German troops entered Leningrad, and in the center they launched an offensive against Moscow. On November 1, 1941, the new Prime Minister Tojo submits to the Cabinet three possible schemes of action in connection with the growing crisis. Time was running out, and Japan had less and less oil. Nevertheless, the Cabinet, while approving the measures taken to prepare for war, insists on continuing negotiations and a diplomatic solution to the conflict. On November 5, several important events take place at once. In Washington, Nomura submits to Secretary of State Hull a draft settlement, the so-called "Draft

B", containing as much as possible

possible concessions for the Japanese side. In words, Nomura warns the American about the danger of breaking off negotiations. An

unprecedented meeting of army and military leaders is taking place in Tokyo. fleet in the presence of the Emperor. Two

228

branches of the armed forces conclude an official Treaty of mutual assistance in case of war ... Japan, after all, in many respects remained a feudal country.

The Naval Department of the Headquarters orders the Combined Fleet to begin preparations for operations against the USA, Great Britain and Holland. Aircraft carriers destined to attack Pearl Harbor immediately left the inland Sea of Japan. Their path lay on the island of Etorufu (Iturup) in the group of the southern Kuril Islands. This area was chosen as a waiting area because there was no population in the southern Kuriles, and the fog that hung over the islands all winter prevented any, even accidental, detection of ships.

The next morning, an executive order was issued for the South Seas and the formation and deployment of ship formations began. On

November 21, Hull, in a private conversation with the heads of the US military and naval departments, said: "Now the negotiations between Japan and the United States are over, all means of diplomacy have been used. The business in the future should be entrusted to the

military." On November 26, the strike aircraft carrier formation under the command of Admiral Nagumo left the Kuril Islands. The plan of operation provided for four refueling at sea and a throw to the Hawaiian Islands from the north. Everything was ready in the war, but the radio operators of the flagship aircraft carrier Akagi were listening to the air all the time. If only Nomura and Hull agree, the operation will be canceled immediately and the ships will return to Japan. But

on the same day, Hull hands over a note to the Japanese ambassador, unbearably rude even by American standards. The restoration of relations is possible only in the event of the immediate withdrawal of Japanese troops from Indochina and China (not excluding Manchuria), the breaking of the "Anti-Comintern Pact" between Japan, Germany and Russia, and the refusal to support any governments in China, except for the Kuomintang. Japan took this document as a break in negotiations, and on December 1, in the Imperial Palace (and again in the presence of the Emperor), the Cabinet decides to start a war. The strategy is over. The tactics began.

229

-5-

On December 8, the Japanese achieved the same complete operational and tactical surprise as the Germans on June 22. But at least Soviet intelligence could not freely read German ciphers. American diplomats received the text of the new instructions sent to Nomura from Tokyo, even before the Japanese ambassador. Roosevelt and Hull, in provoking Japan, were aware of the consequences. All their wars in the status of a "modernized" power Country

the rising sun began with a sudden attack.

Hull promptly warned the military leadership of the inevitability of war. Yes, it was not an official statement, but how was the responsible military leader to react to the notice of the head of the US foreign policy department about the termination of negotiations and a future war? The commander of the fleet of the Soviet Union, Admiral

N. Kuznetsov, despite the TASS message of June 14 and constant reminders of "provocations", already in May introduced "Readiness No. 2" in the fleet, which, in fact, put the ships on martial law. On the night of the 22nd, "Ready No. 1" was declared. And when the observation posts reported about the approaching unidentified aircraft,

Soviet ships were ordered to open fire.

Oddly enough, the US Pacific Fleet operated in peacetime in both November and December 1941. The same was true of US forces in the Philippine Islands and, surprisingly enough, of British forces in Malaya. On the night of December 8¹, Washington tried

warn commanders on the ground about the war

¹ Events in the Pacific are unfolding on both sides of the date line, which introduces some confusion. According to Japanese historiography, the war begins on Monday, December 8 (9th GMT). In the Hawaiian Islands of the United States, however, it was the morning of Sunday, December 7 (local time, one hour ahead of the 13th GMT; behind Tokyo by 19 hours), and in Washington, the middle of the day on December 7 (19th belt: time behind Tokyo by 14 hours). 230

possible "problems", but the notice was purely advisory in nature, and "due to problems with the non-transmission of radio waves"¹, not everyone received it. The same goes for the break in talks (received in Washington at 4:00 am Hawaiian time) - it was delivered to the commander of the Pacific Fleet only a few hours after the start of the war. The Japanese achieved surprise, which could not be. ... "A sharp wind blew from the northeast, dispersing a heavy, steep wave. The

weather was on the verge of non-flying. Actually, for slightly less

experienced crews, it would become non-flying. Nagumo could not believe that all this was a ghostly, flickering light on the deck, the noise of warming up, or rather, already warmed up engines, joyful, happy faces of the

pilots ("...bombing Pearl Harbor! Dreams come true!"), Fuchida² with a headband handed by one of the mechanics - really happens. The operation ceased to be a graceful curve on the map and first turned into wake columns of ships moving along the turbulent winter sea: November 5 - Inland Sea of Japan, November 22 - Etorofu Island, November 26 - exit in different ways from the waiting area to the meeting point (42° N. latitude, 170° W), four refuelings at sea (a pitching nightmare, heavy icy hoses slipping out of hands, decks covered with ice and frozen fuel, people slid on them, bloody knees and elbows, and sometimes disappeared overboard, they did not try to save them), December 6 - the last refueling almost in the zone of action of American reconnaissance aircraft from Hawaii and a sharp turn to the south, combat cruising speed, and the Z flag, the legendary flag of Mikasa, the flag of the Old Admiral, on the mast of the Akagi — and now it has also turned into whitish traces of taking off planes, into torpedoes, into bombs, into machine-gun bursts and volleys of anti-aircraft guns, into death and blood. From the official report of the Congressional Commission of Inquiry into the events at Pearl Harbor. Air Commander of the 1st Air Fleet during the raid on Pearl Harbor.

¹

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The aircraft carriers, climbing heavily on the wave, turned into the wind, increasing their speed to full speed. An hour ago, scouts from the Tone and Tama, the newest and most beautiful heavy cruisers of the fleet, went into the dark, low-clouded sky. Now, one after another, the planes of the first wave rose from the half-lit decks and disappeared behind low clouds: 49 horizontal bombers under the direct command of Fuchida, 40 Murata torpedo bombers, 51 Takahashi dive bombers, 43 Itai cover fighters scattered in front.

The sun was rising, illuminating with dark crimson rays the bleak picture of the troubled ocean. It gradually brightened. Nagumo sat down heavily on the canvas chair he had placed on the bridge. Against all expectations, against logic and the theory of probability, his aircraft carrier formation, maneuvering in the zone

the actions of enemy base aviation have not yet been detected"¹ .

-6-

In the period immediately preceding the beginning of the Pacific War, the Americans were a model of carelessness, which, perhaps, has no analogues in the rich military history of Mankind, but the Japanese command, of course, did not know about this and did not count on it. Yamamoto warned Nagumo that if a strike formation was discovered three days before the planes were lifted, then the operation would certainly be cancelled. If - only for a day, it is certainly carried out. The decision in case of contacts with the American patrol forces two days before the estimated time for the start of the war was for Nagumo. Even in their sweet dreams, both commanders could not have imagined that the main base of the US Pacific Fleet would "not see" six heavy

aircraft carriers.

The brilliantly organized radio interception service in the United States (we will encounter it in the next story) informed Admiral Kimmel that since the end of November, "disappeared" from the air

¹ S. Pereslegin, E. Pereslegina. "Pacific premiere;

232

all six heavy aircraft carriers of the Combined Fleet. This was followed by a warning that the heavy cruisers Tone and Tikuma also "disappeared somewhere." Given the rather disturbing news leaking out of Washington, this information was enough to at least organize air patrols around the Hawaiian Islands. Kimmel even tried to do something of the sort, but it immediately became clear that the "flying boats" subordinate to the fleet were not enough for serious patrols, and it took some time to come to an agreement with the army. Kimmel postponed the discussion until Sunday's round of golf with General Short. Short, through his communication channels, received a warning from the Chief of Staff of the US Army, General George Marshall, a mediocre, if not worse, military leader, but an excellent politician and brilliant economist, the future architect of the new world order and the creator of modern geo-

economics. Marshall announced the possibility of some "provocations" from Japan in the coming days. Short took this information in his own way, and throughout the last week before the war he collected his planes at guarded, barbed-wire army airfields. Now the planes stood wing to wing, but, according to Short, they were reliably protected from "spies and saboteurs." But if the high command in Washington (and Roosevelt himself) obviously did not expect any serious incidents in Hawaii, then the Philippine bases should have been the target of an enemy attack in any case. It is all the more surprising that the atmosphere in Manila was even more benevolent than in Pearl Harbor. It was also calm in Singapore, where the ships of T. Philips arrived on the morning of December 2. Although the British Empire had already been at war for two years, Singapore did not prepare for

defense at all. Phillips's attempt to raise the issue of air-raid shelters, blackouts, and the construction of forts protecting Singapore from land, first caused a yawn, and then an official answer: you can't dig air-raid shelters, because the city has a high level of groundwater; forts cannot be built, as there is not enough space for them; and blackout

cannot be entered due to condition

233

uneven Giving up on everything, Philips flew to Manila, where he tried

agree on cooperation with the commander of the Asian fleet, Hart. Hart received him cordially and spoke about his plans for the spring of 1942: joint US-British forces attack Taiwan in a single formation ... For the Japanese command, the

last days of peace were a time of feverish activity. In the Pacific, from the Sea of Okhotsk in the north to the South China Sea in the south, from Hong Kong in the west to Pearl Harbor in the east, the Combined Fleet was deployed, consisting of 18 operational formations, the route of which was calculated to the nearest minute, and the interaction pattern was a masterpiece operational work of Admiral I. Yamamoto: "By the end of the day, which on one side of the date line was considered the seventh, and on

the other - December 8, 1941, the Combined Fleet completed the strategic deployment for the first stage of offensive operations. Now, years and decades later, the operational situation in the Southwest Pacific is as follows:

The operational tension spread from Singapore to the Hawaiian Islands. There are no Japanese ships east of Oahu, which will later be qualified as Yamamoto's mistake. In reality, the Japanese had no place to get mobile forces for operations on the Pearl Harbor-San Diego line, and the deployment of submarines on this line did not correspond to the doctrine of the Combined Fleet. The Nagumo formation and F. Sherman's Lexington

are on anti-parallel courses outside the zone of mutual detection (however, it seems that both sides are satisfied with the latter circumstance).

Two Japanese destroyers - "Sazanami" ("namesake" of the ship-hero of the Russian-Japanese war) and "Ushio" are approaching Midway, having the task of shelling the island. The next morning, the destroyers would report "multiple hits on fuel tanks and other installations of a military nature," while the American garrison would report a few misses from the sea that did not cause any damage.

For operations in Southeast Asia, the shelling of Midway wears a distraction character, but American leadership,

234

in a state of shock after the disasters at Pearl Harbor and Manila, will not pay any attention to these actions of the Combined Fleet. Yamamoto, for his part, regards the sortie of "Ushio" and "Sazanami" as a reconnaissance with far-reaching plans - in the operations of the second stage, Midway is assigned a decisive role. A large convoy that left Hahajima

on December 4 is approaching the island of Guam. There is no fighting here: 5,000 Japanese from the elite Special Marine Landing Units, supported by four Aoba-class heavy cruisers and aircraft from Saipan, are opposed by 500 American garrison men armed with rifles and light machine guns. By capturing Guam, the Japanese will gain partial control of the communications linking the Philippines with the central Pacific Ocean and further with continental America. (In parallel, Yamamoto will take away the Gilbert Islands, Tarawa, Makin, Kwajalein Atoll, Makin from the Americans. Three destroyers and two transports will be quite enough for this.) principle": 4 transports, 2 light cruisers of the 1919 model - "Tatsuta" and "Ternyu", 6 destroyers and 1 first-class, although also far from new, leader - "Yubari". The defense

of Wake was built by the Americans around a battery of five-inch guns, a squadron

Wildcats and a Marine battalion. Given the large number of military and paramilitary formations (construction, airfield units, sailors, sappers, airline employees, radio operators) and the undeniable superiority of coastal artillery over ships of the same caliber, the defense of the island can be considered quite secure. Wake, located midway between the Hawaiian and Mariana Islands, controls the main line of communication from Manila to

East.

A difficult operational situation has been created around the Philippine archipelago. The Japanese are planning several successive (with an interval of one or two days) landings. The primary target is the islands of Batan and Kamguin - respectively 125 and 30 miles north of the archipelago. The sole purpose of these landings will be to create a takeoff

235

landing sites to support the next phase of the invasion: landings at Apari and Vigan in northern Luzon; further on the east coast of Luzon - first in Lingayen Bay, and later in Legazpi - the main forces of the 14th army of General Homma land.

Simultaneously with the sabotage landings north of Luzon, Yamamoto is carrying out an operation directed against the possible activation of the Americans and / or the British in the region of the Pallau Islands. Taking advantage of the released Ryuzhe, he created the Fourth Surprise Attack Force around it, tasked with neutralizing and then capturing Davao, a US Navy base in the far south of the Philippine archipelago. Having captured Davao and the small island of Jolo, halfway between Borneo and Mindanao, the admiral eliminates the last communication line of the Philippines - south to Indonesia and Australia. In addition, he receives a convenient springboard for expanding the operation to Indonesia. The base in Davao is empty, but in Borneo the Americans keep a light cruiser and 9 destroyers, and in Luzon there are heavy and light cruisers, 4

destroyers, 29 submarines, plus numerous auxiliary vessels. These ships, not excluding submarines, will not take part in the defense of the archipelago and will be withdrawn to the south in the coming days. Japanese strike formations went to sea on the sixth or seventh of December. The third Surprise Attack Force (destroyer, 4 destroyers and 2 transports with cover) is sent from

Taiwan to Batan. The first Connection (light cruiser "Natori", 2 divisions of destroyers, minesweepers, escorts and 6 transports) is moving from the Pescadores towards Appari. The second formation (light cruiser "Naka", 5 destroyers and 6 transports), based on Pallau, goes to Vigan. This connection will have the longest hop. Operations in Appari and Vigan will cover the Ashigara heavy cruisers

and "Maya", but on the seventh of December these ships are still in Mako.

The light aircraft carrier Seho, which has not yet entered service, is stationed in Pallau. Fourth Surprise Attack Force along with Cover Force ("Ryudze", heavy cruisers "Nachi",

236

"Haguro", "Myoko", light cruisers "Jintsu" and "Nagaro", 13 destroyers, 7 transports and auxiliary vessels) are tasked not only with operations against Davao, but also with the attack on Manila from the south.

73 vehicles intended for landing the main forces of the army Hommes are still being collected on the island of Taiwan.

Further to the west, Admiral Kondo's main forces operate: Kongo, Haruna, heavy cruisers Atago and Takao, and the 3rd destroyer division. This connection

simultaneously provides long-range cover for both the Philippine and Malay operations, which creates the prerequisites for various combinations of allies aimed at using the tactical overload of Kondo ships. The Tekai cruises off the coast of Indochina, escorted by the destroyer Ashigari, the main force of Ozawa's Malaya Force. The Japanese transports of the Malay group are unloading or settling on a broad

front from the Wharf to Kota Bharu. They are supported by the light cruiser Sendai and 12 destroyers; Ozawa's minelayers set up a barrier minefield to cover the landing area. This move is reinforced by 10 submarines deployed in two lines. The close cover of the convoy is formed by 4 magnificent heavy cruisers of the Mogami class - the so-called "Main Forces of the Escort Force". Tom Philips will oppose these forces on the evening of December 8 with his "Compound Z": "Repulse", "Prince of Wales", 4 escort destroyers. The British will have

the forces of the Chinese naval station in reserve - 3 old light cruisers and 11 destroyers, mostly also old ones. To the south, in Batavia, the excellent light cruising formation of the Dutch Admiral Helfrich is concentrated - "De Ruyter", "Java", "Tromp" with 6 destroyers. At the moment, Helfrich is acting in isolation: neither the British command in Singapore, nor the American command in Manila bothered to at least acquaint him with

with their plans.

Even further south, beyond the Malaya-Indonesian barrier, the Australian fleet, the New Zealand fleet and the Free French forces are resting - the heavy cruiser "Australia", the light cruisers "Perth", "Hobart", "Linder", "Achilles", "Maurices", 2 destroyers.

237

A funny operational situation is emerging around Hong Kong. The British, having neither the strength nor the special desire to defend the "British Crown Colony", keep gunboats there, buildings of almost the last century, the Japanese, not in the mood to attack the city from the sea, sent an old cruiser ("Isuzu") and 2 antique destroyers.

Finally, on the afternoon of December 8, the line forces of the Combined Fleet leave Hashirajima and move to the east, thus carrying out the not quite obvious support for the Nagumo raid .

-7-

The operation against Pearl Harbor went off without a hitch, as they say. In two consecutive attacks, Fuchida's aircraft sank 5 American battleships and damaged 3 more, 188 US Army aircraft were destroyed on airfields, and another 159 were badly damaged. By evening, only 43 aircraft remained in Hawaii capable of taking off, while the Nagumo formation, which had lost 9 fighters, 15 dive bombers and 5 torpedo bombers, could use almost 300 aircraft for a new attack. Fuchida insisted on a third raid, the purpose of which was to be the docks, fuel depots, workshops, port facilities - the entire infrastructure of the American military base, the only one for many thousands of kilometers. But Nagumo considered that he had already caused enough damage to the enemy to remain in deadly waters with almost no fuel. He ordered a full speed retreat to the Marshall Islands. Despite the colossal losses in people and ships, the Americans, in essence, escaped with a fright (not a very light one). The fleet was defeated, but the naval base continued to exist, which made it possible to continue the

war and, in particular, to restore the sunken battleships over time, excluding the Arizona destroyed by the explosion and capsized

"Okhlakom", which the Americans raised S.

¹ Pereslegin, E. Pereslegina. Pacific Premiere.

238

Li, but could not drag it to San Francisco. The main thing is that the aircraft carriers did not receive any damage - the main, as it has now become obvious, the force of war¹ .

-8-

The Hawaiian operation is sometimes called the "raiding" operation, sometimes called the "first pitched battle of the Pacific War." In fact, this strike was a tribute to tradition: Japan has always started and, presumably, will start wars with a surprise attack on the main naval base of the enemy and the solution of the problem of flank support for operations in the main operational direction.

In order to seize the oil fields of Indonesia and ensure the uninterrupted delivery of hydrocarbons to the Metropolis, Japan was given 90 days, and this figure was determined not by the decision of the planning authorities, but by the available fuel reserves and the daily need for it. Yamamoto coped with the task even a little earlier, but the grandiose oncoming battle with the participation of the land, sea and air forces of the four powers was by no means an "easy war". In fact, in the South Seas, the Combined Fleet won its Barbarossa, demonstrating to everyone

¹ One has to read that Roosevelt provoked an attack on Pearl Harbor, having previously "removed" aircraft carriers from there. This, of course, is complete nonsense. The American president, like his military advisers, believed that Japan would advance in the southern sector of the Pacific Ocean. In addition, with all his desire, Roosevelt could not determine the deployment of the Pacific Fleet - this was the prerogative of Kimmel. The aircraft carriers, as they say, were saved by fate: on December 7, each of them was busy fulfilling its task, which had nothing to do with the impending war. Lexington was engaged in the delivery of army aircraft to Midway. The Enterprise was transporting Marine aircraft to Wake Island. The Saratoga was off the west coast of the United States and was heading for Pearl Harbor (during the course of the war, this aircraft carrier would demonstrate some inexplicable ability to "accidentally" be out of battle space). Yorktown and the newly commissioned Hornet, which entered service only on October 25, 1941, remained in the Atlantic, and the Hornet could not physically arrive in Hawaii by December 8. 239

to the world the finest art of the interaction of heterogeneous forces operating in a vast space. In historical

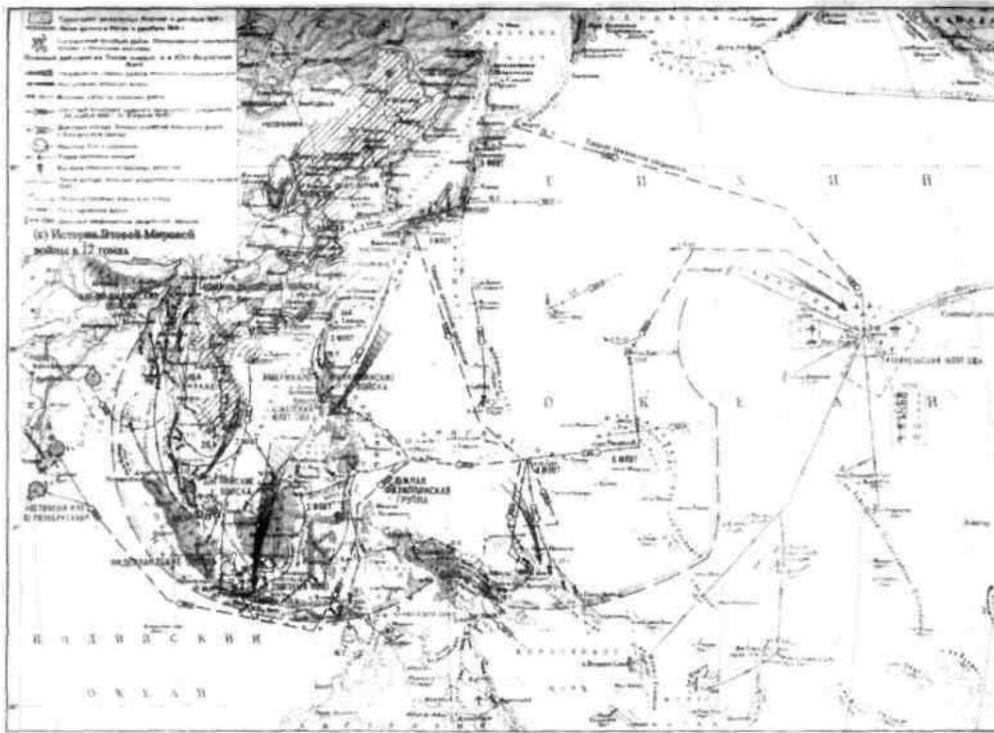
chronicles, this single battle is usually subdivided into Malayan, Philippine and Indonesian operations. The campaign in Malaya was

emphatically plot-driven, it had a "personal" character in the sense that the course and outcome of events was determined not so much by the balance of power as by "subjective factors" and "accidents unpredictable in the war." The battle for the Philippines was not so much won by the Japanese as lost by the Americans. In Indonesia, the people and ships of the Land of the Rising Sun met with desperate, but poorly organized resistance. The picture of a great battle in the South Seas was supplemented by private Japanese

operations against Guam and Wake Island. Guam SMDC! captured quite easily, but the landing on Wake was repelled by the American Marines, and the landing units suffered huge losses. Here a subtle historical "fork" arises: by deploying one of the divisions of Nagumo Yamamoto's formation against the island, he intended to attract one or two American aircraft carriers with this "bait", which, as he knew, were "somewhere nearby". None of this beautiful design came to fruition as the US Pacific Fleet abandoned Wake to its fate. The Americans had an acute crisis of command, and all their thoughts were focused on only one thing - to avoid battle and save aircraft carriers² .

¹ Special Naval Landing Units. In essence, ground forces belonging to the fleet. However,

Fletcher's² carrier formation was indeed moving towards Wake. However, as soon as the headquarters at Pearl Harbor received information about a new Japanese landing and about the presence of enemy carrier-based aircraft in the air over Wake, the ships were immediately withdrawn. As a result, the defense of the island was provided by 1 coastal battery and 4 Wildcat fighters. These forces sank a destroyer, damaged a cruiser, and thwarted the first landing attempt by Japanese troops, inflicting heavy losses on them. On the final day of Wake's defense, the Wildcats engaged hundreds of carrier-based aircraft from the Yamaguchi Division and managed to shoot down two of them before being shot down themselves. Wake to this day remains an example of how Americans really know how to fight. 240



Pacific Ocean and South Seas 1941



Malaya

242

... Transports of the Malayan landing force left Hainan on December 4th. On the morning of the 6th, they, along with the escort ships, were accidentally discovered by an Australian pilot who took to the skies in completely non-flying weather, with mathematical accuracy "left" directly on the Japanese ships, correctly determined the composition of the squadron and submitted a meaningful and fairly accurate report to his command. Surprise was broken at the very beginning of the operation, even before Pearl Harbor. Japanese officers in Indochina took frantic measures to disperse their aircraft and somehow cover them from the inevitable enemy preemptive strike. The guard ships closed formation, preparing for the last battle - at the cost of their lives, they had to divert the enemy fleet from the wake column of transports.

T. Philips, still in Manila, was waiting for an order to conduct a pre-planned and prepared operation "Matador", which provides for the invasion of Thailand and the destruction of Japanese landings from land and sea, regardless of where they landed - in Thailand or, in fact, in Malaya.

However, the operation was not ordered. According to the commander of the British troops in Singapore, General Percival, the Japanese formation did not pose a threat to Malaya, since it was going to the coast of Thailand, and it also did not create a threat to Thailand, since it was in neutral waters.

On the morning of the next day, the Japanese squadron was "lost". In the evening, one of the two or three planes sent out to search (it seems to be Australian again) again discovered a convoy of transports that was moving south - directly to the British possessions. The governor of Singapore and Malaya, Sir Thomas, did not take any action, but allowed aerial reconnaissance to resume in the morning.

Japanese troops landed at night on the very border of Malaya and Thailand. Having captured two important airfields, the commander of the invasion forces, General Yamashita, moved not to Singapore, but to the north - to Thailand. There, the Japanese troops, after a short unintelligible battle with local border guards (with whom the higher authorities did not share the bribe received from the Japanese ambassador in a timely manner),

243

took control of the country's road network. After that, the Japanese, using the roads built by the British, launched a rapid offensive to the south.

On the morning of December 8, the British attacked the bridgehead with army aviation. But the Japanese were no longer there - Yamashita's battalions went deep into the peninsula. After circling over the landing sites and without receiving any specific order, the pilots landed at sites in northern Malaya for refueling. It was at this moment that Japanese bombers from Indochina "just in case" plowed up all the airfields not occupied by Yamashita that were within reach. And British aviation in Malaya was finished. But there was still a connection of T. Philips and the

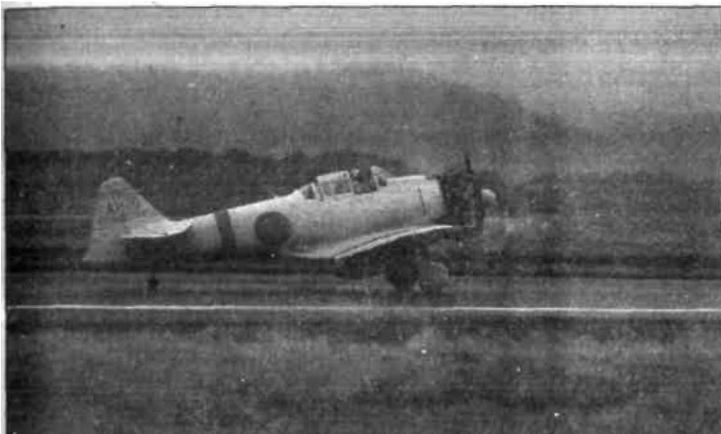
English army. -9- At the beginning of the war, the British forces in

Singapore exceeded 90,000 men, with more than half of these forces being British and Australian. The Japanese were sorely lacking in transports, so Yamashita was able to land in Malaya hardly half of this number - three divisions with a minimum of heavy weapons and a completely insufficient amount of ammunition, not to mention food. Under these conditions, the Japanese commander could only count on a "blitzkrieg", and in its ultimate, "Rommel" version. The basis of British field tactics was the "racial theory": it was assumed that one Englishman was standing on the battlefield of ten

Japanese savages. The very first clashes with the army of Yamashita, who did not put a penny on either the "unshakable postulates of military art", or the "knightly rules of warfare", "nor international conventions", dispelled all illusions.

... On the night of December 8, Singapore, still brightly lit, was bombed by Japanese aircraft. It did no real damage, but the psychological impact was terrible. Panic broke out in the city, which only yesterday lived a comfortable colonial life.

244



Zero

The deployment of ground forces against the Japanese bridgeheads was belated. The Japanese divisions, making extensive use of communications controlled by the enemy, shot down the British units and began to rapidly move south.

Realizing that by the end of the first day of the war, the enemy created a real threat to Singapore, that the local command was confused and lost control over events, T. Philips tried on his own to save the British Empire from inevitable collapse. On the evening of December 8, he threw the battleships of the Z Compound into a desperate raid. T. Philips came closer to

success than post-war historians would write about it. The British ships had no air cover. It

was not possible to organize aerial reconnaissance: There were not enough cover destroyers. The headquarters in Singapore could not report anything about the enemy except rumors and legends. Nevertheless, the T. Philips squadron managed to create certain threats to the Japanese bridgeheads and even caused something like an operational crisis. But it turned out that Admiral Yamamoto had foreseen this crisis - and in precisely this "edition" - back in the fall. In October, two air corps were deployed to Indochina. In the last days of November, when the possibility of the timely arrival of the "Z Connection" in Singapore became a real operational factor, the commander of the

245

united fleet, by his order, relocated torpedo bombers to advanced airfields. On December 10, 85 Japanese aircraft at the limit of range "got" the battleships of T. Philips. In such a battle, the English ships did not have the slightest chance. Soon the departing planes signaled to the British destroyers, which they did not attack: "We have done our job, you do yours." I mean, choose people. This was practically the end of the campaign in

Malaya, although the pursuit of the British army and the siege of Singapore, fortified and located on the island, took a long time. "On February 10, 1942, W. Churchill will write to Generals

Pervival and Wainwell: *"You must understand how we assess the situation in Singapore here. It was reported to the Cabinet that Percival now has over a hundred thousand people, of which thirty-three thousand are British and seventeen thousand Australians. It is doubtful that the Japanese had so many soldiers in the entire Malay Peninsula ... Under such conditions, the defenders have a significant numerical superiority over the enemy, and they should have defeated the attackers in the course of a well-prepared battle, and the civilian population. The battle must be brought to a victorious end at all costs... Commanders and senior officers must die on the battlefield along with their troops. The honor of the British Empire and the British army is at stake. I rely on you that there will be no no mercy is allowed, no weakness in any form..."* No mercy will be allowed. The city will burn, the wounded will die without water in luxurious cinemas turned into field hospitals. Children will tear up the grass on the lawns and eat it. The British will set fire to the fuel depots, and the smoke from burning fuel oil will close the sky to the inhabitants of Singapore.

"You must continue to inflict the greatest possible damage on the enemy, if necessary - even in street battles. Your actions, fettering the enemy's forces and inflicting losses on him, can have a decisive influence on operations in other theaters of war." This last week

of Singapore, Yamashita will selectively destroy hospitals. Until the last person.

246

And he will achieve that Percival will order the medical staff to be taken out of the besieged city. By February 15, the Japanese offensive will finally bog down, and Yamashita will use the last chance: he will offer the British to surrender immediately. Percival will ask for a delay, but the commander of the Japanese siege army, realizing his desperate situation, will behave rudely and haughtily, and his English counterpart will accept an ultimatum outstretched with a trembling hand. -10- Unlike the battle in Malaya, which had

its own tragic plot, Japanese operations in the Philippines developed very easily. Everything was decided on the very first day, when the aircraft of the Land of the Rising Sun under the command of Tsukahara defeated the American airfields of Iba and Clark on the island of Luzon and seized air supremacy over the northern part of the archipelago.

At first, nothing foreshadowed such a result. The weather intervened in the course of the war, chaining Japanese aircraft to the ground on the island of Taiwan. There was no question of any synchronization with the attack on Pearl Harbor, hours went by, and all that remained was to wait for American bombers from the Philippines. Now no one will say why the Japanese raid, which was late by 10 hours, found the American "flying fortresses" on the ground. Either in Manila they never found out that the war had begun, or, which looks more plausible, the American command simply consulted for all these ten hours². The result, in any case, was impressive: by the evening there were only three planes left in Luzon capable of taking off.

This circumstance, to a certain extent, violated the plans of the Japanese command, which counted on a long positional war in the air and a "step-by-step" increase in S. Pereslegin,

¹ E. Pereslegin. Pacific Premiere. For the official

² American version, see Morrison or Pacific

premiere." 247



Philippines

operations, when the island of Kumgain is first captured - only to

place seaplanes on it for one day and cover the landing on Aparri, the possession of which allowed, in turn, to attack Vigan, from where the planes could reliably control the sky over Lingayen Bay in order to ...

By the beginning of the second day of the war, these complex calculations lost their meaning. For some time, the Japanese command tried to understand what the Americans were actually trying to do. The surface ships of the "Asian Fleet" were inactive, and the largest of them - the heavy cruiser "Houston" - was evacuated to Borneo. Aviation also did not show activity, although from time to time it reported the destruction of large enemy ships (for some reason, the battlecruiser "Kha

248

rune", which was "drowned" three times). The ground units moved confusedly in the Manila area, the order to patrol and protect the coast was not given. The southern Philippines, along with the most important Davao base, the American commander, General MacArthur, apparently decided to surrender without a fight.

Under these greenhouse conditions, the landing of the Japanese 14th Army under the command of Homma took a long time and was not very convincing. However, the Japanese soon got used to the fact that the enemy really did not offer any resistance, and began to quickly move forward. MacArthur requested aircraft carriers from Washington. Not having received them, he relieved himself of all responsibility for

the defense of Manila. Homma's vanguard, defiantly advancing along the main road, stumbled upon the Philippine division, which immediately scattered, dropping their weapons. Upon learning of this, the American commander ordered the army, which had not yet come into contact with the enemy, to withdraw to the Batan peninsula and further to the island fortress of Corregidor. The

Philippines passed into the hands of Homma. On March 10, MacArthur arbitrarily abandoned troops and flew to Australia, after which he sent the following telegram to the besieged fortress: *"The President of the United States ordered me to break through the Japanese defense lines and proceed from Corregidor to Australia with the aim, as I understand it, of organizing an American offensive against Japan. His first task will be the liberation of the Philippines. I broke through and I'll be back."* By this time, Japanese

¹ base aviation reigned supreme in the airspace of the Philippine archipelago. Not only the air fleet of Tsukahara (based on the island of Taiwan) could act against American ships, but also torpedo bombers released in Indochina and Malaya. The Japanese aircraft carriers of the Nagumo formation were not seriously involved in operations in the south, providing them with strategic cover; these ships had every chance to cut off the American aircraft carriers from the Hawaiian Islands and destroy them in cooperation with the base aviation. MacArthur, of course, did not know the details of all this, but he guessed about the general operational situation around the Philippines. So the general had no illusions about his request.

249

To storm the impregnable underground fortress, Homma managed to allocate only two thousand people. The landing under fire was completely unsuccessful, and only about six hundred reserve soldiers ended up on the enemy shore. Of course, they failed to break into the casemates, there was nowhere to retreat, and they could not return back to Batan due to the lack of undamaged watercraft. In the middle of the day, a pontoon with several tanks accidentally made its way to Corregidor, completely useless against tunnels and concrete shelters. A few minutes later, the paratroopers were surprised to hear on the radio that the American garrison was capitulating to them...

-11

- The offensive against Java began almost simultaneously with the actions in

Malaya and the Philippines.

"Already at 5.30 am on December 13, a convoy with troops for the oil-bearing regions of Borneo left Kamrang Bay. Once again, the Japanese demonstrated a brilliant, almost fencing "technique" of using ship formations: although the forces allocated to attack Miri and Seria included only three destroyers, accompanied by a small anti-submarine ship (in fact, also a destroyer, but hopelessly outdated), there were "indirect cover" was organized - the light cruiser "Yura" appeared and disappeared, the hydro-air transport "Kamikawa Maru", performing obligatory



Indonesia

250

aircraft carriers, "special" super-destroyers "Fubuki" and "Sagiri", heavy cruisers "Kumano" and "Suzuya" from Kurita's detachment. The landing took place on December

16, and she met no resistance. British Borneo, the operational center of the South Seas, the intersection of the operational lines of force of the great powers, contesting each other's dominance over the Pacific Ocean, the Japanese captured without a fight. However, the oil refinery and all the equipment of the fields were destroyed. The English governor gave the corresponding order on December 8 - long before the amphibious transports went to sea and even before the operational crisis in Malaya was resolved in favor of Yamashita and Kondo! Panic-driven decision turned out to be the only coup

Englishmen for the whole company¹.

By the end of December, the first signs of fatigue appeared in the Japanese fleet. Continuous active hostilities exhausted people, more and more small but annoying mistakes were made, accidental losses grew. Yamamoto, seeing that the offensive in Indonesia began to lose shape, sent the 1st and 5th

th division of aircraft carriers.

This decision allowed for a sharp increase in operations in the South Seas, but from a strategic point of view, it was a serious mistake. First, there was a dangerous tendency to break up the Nagumo formation into parts (the aircraft carriers of the 2nd Yamashita Division, who were delayed at Wake and arrived in the Metropolis only by the new year, urgently needed rest). Secondly, in the waters surrounding Java, there were no significant targets for the elite pilots of the Combined Fleet. As a result, the ships either settled on the Palau Islands, or wandered aimlessly in the confusion of islands and straits. Carrier-based aircraft were used to bombard Rabaul, sent against Port Darwin in Australia. She supported the landings and organized aerial reconnaissance in the interests of the army command. In any case, the support of the aircraft carrier formation returned the pace to the Japanese offensive. Every day the ring of operational units around Java

tightened up more and more.

¹ S. Pereslegin, E. Pereslegina. "Pacific Premiere"



Yamamoto

252

The battle caught up with the Houston: the battles for Borneo began. Japan finally found it necessary to declare war on Holland (which, incidentally, had been at war with the Empire of the Rising Sun for more than a month). The widespread use of airborne troops by the attacking side led to a confused and strange battle for Celebos. At the very edge of operational space, in the New Guinea Sea, the Japanese captured the important forward bases of Rabaul and Kavieng. Every day they more thoroughly "settled" the South Seas. By mid-February, the situation in the Java region became

critical for the Anglo-American-Dutch allies. In addition, the Malay operation had just entered a phase of fading, which gave the Japanese the opportunity to transfer Ozawa's cruiser formation to Indonesia, which was tasked with capturing an oil refinery in Palembang (Sumatra). "These days (February 12-15, 1941) the evacuation of Europeans from Singapore reached its peak. Poorly

organized official - and unofficial, not organized at all. Dozens of ships and steamers, hundreds of tugs, schooners, junks tried to leave the dying city. It doesn't matter where - to Java, to Sumatra, to Australia ... A steady northeast wind was blowing, the sea was calm, the opposite shore of the strait seemed close, within easy reach. In Singapore, oil storage facilities were set on fire, and black smoke from burning fuel oil covered the sky with torn panels, a crimson haze hung over the strait.

Two vehicles crashed into this crowd of ships and people at right angles.

fleet and one cruiser squadron. Another one, Doorman's strike force, was approaching the Banga Strait from the south.

Ozawa gave the order to clear the strait.

The order was carried

out. In the burning city, no one cared about the number of refugees anymore.

Therefore, history does not know exactly how many people found their death in the narrow straits between the mainland and Sumatra. Not everyone was lucky enough to die from a bullet or drown with their ships. Many were expected to die slowly on waterless islands and rocks - neither the ABDA headquarters nor the Japanese command cared about their fate.

253

Only 1,600 people are known to have made it to Australia or Ceylon. On the 14th, the day before the fall of Singapore, Ozawa dropped an airborne assault on Palembang. This time the paratroopers were successful - they killed almost everything, but prevented the destruction of an oil refinery and half of the strategic oil reserves in the Dutch East Indies .

On the night of February 28, the last organized Allied force in the theater of operations, Admiral Doorman's squadron, was defeated. And by March 1, fragments of this squadron were destroyed, and the campaign in the South Seas ended.

The results of this campaign are best expressed by a phrase that slightly parodies W. Churchill: "Never before has so much been given to so few." The United Fleet fulfilled its first task, providing the empire with the resource base necessary for the further conduct of the war. From now on, Japan reigned supreme in the western and southern sectors of the Pacific Ocean .

¹ S. Pereslegina, E. Pereslegina. Pacific Premiere. Note that

² in the first phase of the Pacific campaign there are no historical "forks" (except for the "duel" with Wake Island, which can only be distinguished in the analytical "microscope"). The Combined Fleet ran its version of the Barbarossa perfectly. M. Fuchida could complain about Nagumo's lack of imagination and the proper "samurai spirit", but, in reality, the advanced position of the strike aircraft carrier was risky. Nagumo might have guessed that the enemy's air force in Hawaii had been irreparably damaged, but he couldn't know for sure. Meanwhile, the squadron at his disposal was too valuable, the loss of even one or two aircraft carriers would be irreplaceable. Frankly, I'm sure that M. Fuchida, if he were in Nagumo's place and felt the full burden of responsibility, would have made the same decision. And the assumption that not Nagumo, but Yamamoto himself or, for example, Ozawa, could stand on the Akagi bridge takes us too far: in the essentially feudal Japanese Empire, such a possibility was completely excluded at the first stage of the war.

The Allies, of course, made many mistakes and made it much easier for the Japanese to solve their problems. But it must be borne in mind that after the neutralization of the Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor, the campaign in the South Seas will be faster or slower, with greater or lesser

After Hitler declared war on the United States, the space of war took shape definitively, and hostilities swept the whole world. The five warring empires have fully deployed their forces. The debut stage of the geopolitical game is over. On the "world chessboard" is the position of deep

middlegame.

losses - won by the Japanese side, which seized dominance at sea. Neither the United States nor Great Britain at that time had the forces capable of radically turning the tide. Therefore, although we can vary the different events. this is not reflected in the final result of the campaign and the Alternative Reality does not arise.

Great Britain obviously lost in the South Seas already because it was not a subject of the Pacific War at all, which developed against the will of the former "mistress of the seas". T. Philips was the only person who did not want to admit this, and his death (despite the fact that more than 2,000 people from the crews of the Repulse and the Prince of Wales were rescued by the destroyers of the escort) was a natural conclusion to the plot.

Japan was a subject of strategy, not geopolitics. In the political space, the actions of the leadership of the Land of the Rising Sun were calculated by F. Roosevelt from beginning to end, so there are no "duels" here either. F. Roosevelt achieved his goal - the vote in Congress on the issue of entering the war was almost unanimous. The price, however, turned out to be much higher than the president expected. F. Roosevelt rightly believed that for Japan, entry into the war with the United States was in itself an act of national catastrophe. But thanks to the efforts of I. Yamamoto, T. Nagumo, M. Fuchida and other Japanese adherents of the "miracle strategy", the beginning of the war in the Pacific turned into a "Day of Shame" for the United States of America. On the morning of December 8, not only the Japanese, but also the Americans faced a real threat of defeat and complete loss of positions in the world. Such was I. Yamamoto's "strategic amendment" to Roosevelt's geopolitical plan: instead of a prearranged "small victorious war", a complex game with chances (and risks) for both sides. But even if F.

Roosevelt had been fully aware of the level of danger, he would hardly have made a different decision. In 1941, the United States faced only one choice: to become a "world power" instead of Great Britain, or to slowly degrade, vegetating from one economic crisis to another. In other words, everything that happened to England in the Current Reality could happen to the USA. The resilience of the American nation was manifested precisely in the fact that in this critical situation, power in the country, far beyond the "framework" of the already considerable presidential powers, was concentrated precisely in the hands of F. Roosevelt. Such an arrangement of "plots" leaves no room for Alternatives.

255

Plot three: Germany's last chance

In the winter of 1941, the Wehrmacht showed greatness of spirit comparable to that demonstrated by the Red Army in the fall. The Moscow battle was a knockout, and the operational situation on the Eastern Front for a long time bordered on a complete and total disaster. In at least one respect, A. Hitler was right: by the time the commanders on the ground got their bearings in the situation and understood the scale of the Soviet counteroffensive, the decision on a strategic withdrawal was already too late. Troops suffering from a lack of fuel and warm clothes, having lost their mobility, would simply freeze in the snow. Hitler's instinctive decision to "hold" the cities under all circumstances, turning them into the framework of the Eastern Front, saved the soldiers and officers of Army Group Center from the fate that befell Napoleon's great army in 1812. But the price was also great. In the winter of 1941, Hitler demanded the

impossible from the troops. The Fuhrer mercilessly removed from the army all military leaders who dared to measure his instructions with the real state of affairs at the front or simply "have a judgment." Officers with rich practical combat experience, but with insufficient operational training, came to the vacated places. After the Battle of Moscow, a gap between tactics and strategy emerged in German military art, and in the future it will only grow. As a result, the newly acquired unsurpassed stamina of the infantry will prove to Germany only as a means to prolong the war. Again and again, the Reich will achieve excellent tactical results, but they will never add up to a coherent strategic "picture".

H. Kluge, who took over Army Group Center, was smarter, more sophisticated and probably smarter than F. von Bock. But Bock was able to see the war behind individual battles, while Kluge believed that the whole war is made up of individual battles.

In general, the level of leadership of the Wehrmacht fell. Moreover, the defeat near Moscow changed the whole style of relations between the commanding bodies of the Nazi army. From now on, clear limits were set on the initiative of individual military leaders. It has already been mentioned that, starting from the

256

In December 1941, commanders of corps and divisions were deprived of the right to independently make decisions on the movement of troops from their positions.

This undermined the mobility of German troops in the same way as the lack of vehicles. Of

course, the reality turned out to be more complicated. Even after the December "defeat of the generals" perpetrated by Hitler, the German army left many commanders with operational abilities and able to defend their position. Q. Model, by the way, one of the military "nominees", reacted to another instruction "from above" with the question: "My Fuhrer, who is in command of the 9th Army? Me or you? E. Manstein had the ability to convincingly explain his own point of view on the situation, and, I must say, Hitler was more receptive to reasonable argumentation than is depicted in post-war German memoirs. E. Rommel simply ignored orders that did not suit him (believing, obviously, that "they will not send further Africa"). The problem was, firstly, that after the Battle of

Moscow, the proportion of such commanders in the German army decreased. G. Runstedt, F. Bock, G. Guderian, G. Goth, E. Hoepner created an era in military art, they were the main performers of all the outstanding campaigns of the Wehrmacht. The officers who replaced them did not differ in their bright individuality - it is no coincidence that the 2nd Panzer Army forever remained in history as the "Guderian group", and it is unlikely that many will remember now who commanded it after 1941.

¹ "January 1942 July 1943 Colonel General Rudolf Schmidt, July 1943-June 1944 Colonel General Lothar von Rendulich, June-July 1944 Panzer General Franz Boehme, July 1944-May 1945 Artillery General Max de Angelis." <http://ostfront.ru/Text/Heer.html> (See Appendix 11). The managerial problem faced by the German army in the winter of 1941 recurs regularly in modern business. At the first stage, when the enterprise grows and the market sector belonging to it is formed, initiative, energetic and intelligent employees achieve maximum success. But when growth stops, there is always a struggle to cut costs. "Advanced" forms of reporting, discipline, subordination are being created. Now career success is provided only to executive mediocrities. It is clear that in the event of a crisis or (which happens very rarely) the beginning of a new phase of growth, new employees turn out to be insolvent.

257

Secondly, any coordination required time. Even in the winter of 1941-1942, when the offensive of the Red Army was not distinguished by either flexibility or speed, this created its own problems. But in 1942, Soviet troops gained experience in maneuver operations at a high price, and the following year they received an adequate tool for conducting such operations - tank armies of a homogeneous composition. The collapse of the Eastern Front in 1944 was due not only to the material, technical and numerical superiority of the "Russians", but also to the paralysis of the control

mechanism of the Wehrmacht. Thirdly, by acting in their own way, the initiative commanders violated the formal order. This could cost them their positions, and sometimes their lives (an example of this is the case of Count Sponeck¹), moreover, a kind of "corruption" arose in the army, when orders are violated everywhere

with universal tacit approval. However, all of the above problems concerned the future, and at the end of December 1941 there was no certainty that the Army Group Center would be able to "hook" on the fortified cities and hold the front. Apparently, although the state of the Soviet troops was far from brilliant,

We note in this regard that as soon as Germany had a chance to resume the offensive on the Eastern Front (that is, literally a month or two after the resignation), G. Goth was appointed commander of the 4th Panzer Army, von Bock received Army Group South, G Rundstedt leads the command in the West. But G. Guderian, who spoiled relations with all command authorities, no longer found a place in the new Wehrmacht staffing table. Later, in March 1943, when the "post mortem" stage had already begun for the German army, the Fuhrer would appoint G. Guderian as Inspector General of the Armored Forces, giving him all

traits of a "crisis manager"...

¹ Count Shponek, commander of the 42nd Army Corps of the 11th Army, found himself in a critical situation during the Kerch-Feodosia offensive operation of the Soviet troops, without agreement with the army command, ordered the withdrawal of the 46th Infantry Division. E. Manstein removed Sponeck from command. Later, Count Sponeck was brought before a military tribunal, which sentenced him to death, commuted to imprisonment. After the failure of the assassination attempt on Hitler in 1944, Count Sponeck was shot. (See E. Manstein, *Lost Victories*.) 258

there was not even one, but several winning strategies for the Red Army. G. Zhukov, however, "wound up." Finding that the Nazi army was not undertaking a serious withdrawal and was trying to hold on to a position unsuitable for this, he correctly determined the points of connection, the loss of which would lead to the progressive disintegration of the defense. And G. Zhukov over and over again throws his troops to storm the most durable German bastion - Rzhev. As in chess, in war, the payoff for tactical mistakes comes almost immediately.

The Soviet offensive is choking near Rzhev, repeated attempts to repeat it in the same grouping only lead to an increase in losses. The Germans are gaining time to transfer divisions from the west, build rear fortified positions, and put their troops in order. Gradually it becomes clear that the Red Army lost the most important pace, and the tension near Moscow was discharged. Now the Soviet offensive played into the hands of the Germans. The more Russian divisions were drawn into the orbit of the battles near Rzhev, Vyazma, Sychevka, Demyansk, the better the position of the Wehrmacht became. In the

winter of 1941, Germany unexpectedly got another chance to win the world war. On February 12, the OKH issues "Advance Orders for the conduct of hostilities on the Eastern Front." A month and a half later, on March 28, the Fuhrer has a meeting on planning the summer campaign. On April 4, OKW Directive No. 41 appears: the decision to carry out the strategic offensive operation "Blau".

-1- The battle of Moscow and the subsequent months of fruitless positional battles created a certain balance at the front, which was extremely difficult for both the Soviet and German sides to break. One of the laws of strategy states that with the correct "play" equal positions are always transformed into equal ones.

In this situation, the Soviet General Staff rightly proposed to switch to strategic defense by providing



Plans of the parties for the spring and summer of 1942

the opponent the opportunity to use his trump cards in an anti-positional offensive. The top leadership of the Red Army rightly believed that time was working for the USSR: every month the factories produced more and more military equipment, and the troops at the front and in the rear gained experience in modern warfare.

Everyone formally agreed with the Stavka's decision to switch to strategic defense, but the front commanders and, above all, S. Timoshenko expressed a number of "reservations" regarding the offensive operations already planned and prepared by them. The result was a compromise

that is known to be worse than any of the alternatives. With the general defensive plan of the

summer campaign of 1942, a number of fronts received active missions, moreover, not linked to any single plan. The troops of the Bryansk Front were ordered to liberate Kursk. The Southwestern Front was to advance on Kharkov, and then jointly

260

together with the Southern Front to take possession of the Donbass and reach the line of the Dnieper. The Crimean Front was required to defeat the enemy on the peninsula. Troops of the Western, Kalinin and North-Western fronts also received private offensive missions. -2- For its part, the

Nazi leadership quickly came to the decision that Germany, from now on, could not attack on the entire front due to a lack of available forces and low troop mobility. It was required to choose one strategic direction. In the north, the prerequisite for any serious operation was

the capture of Leningrad. The past year has shown the complexity of this task. In addition, the short northern summer and many months of muddy roads limited the time of the operation, and depressing lack of roads prevented the deployment of forces.

Army Group Center suffered the most during the winter. In addition, according to the German command, it was near Moscow that the main reserves of the Soviet troops were concentrated.

The south direction remained. On March 28, the main goal of the 1942 campaign was finally formulated - the conquest of oil